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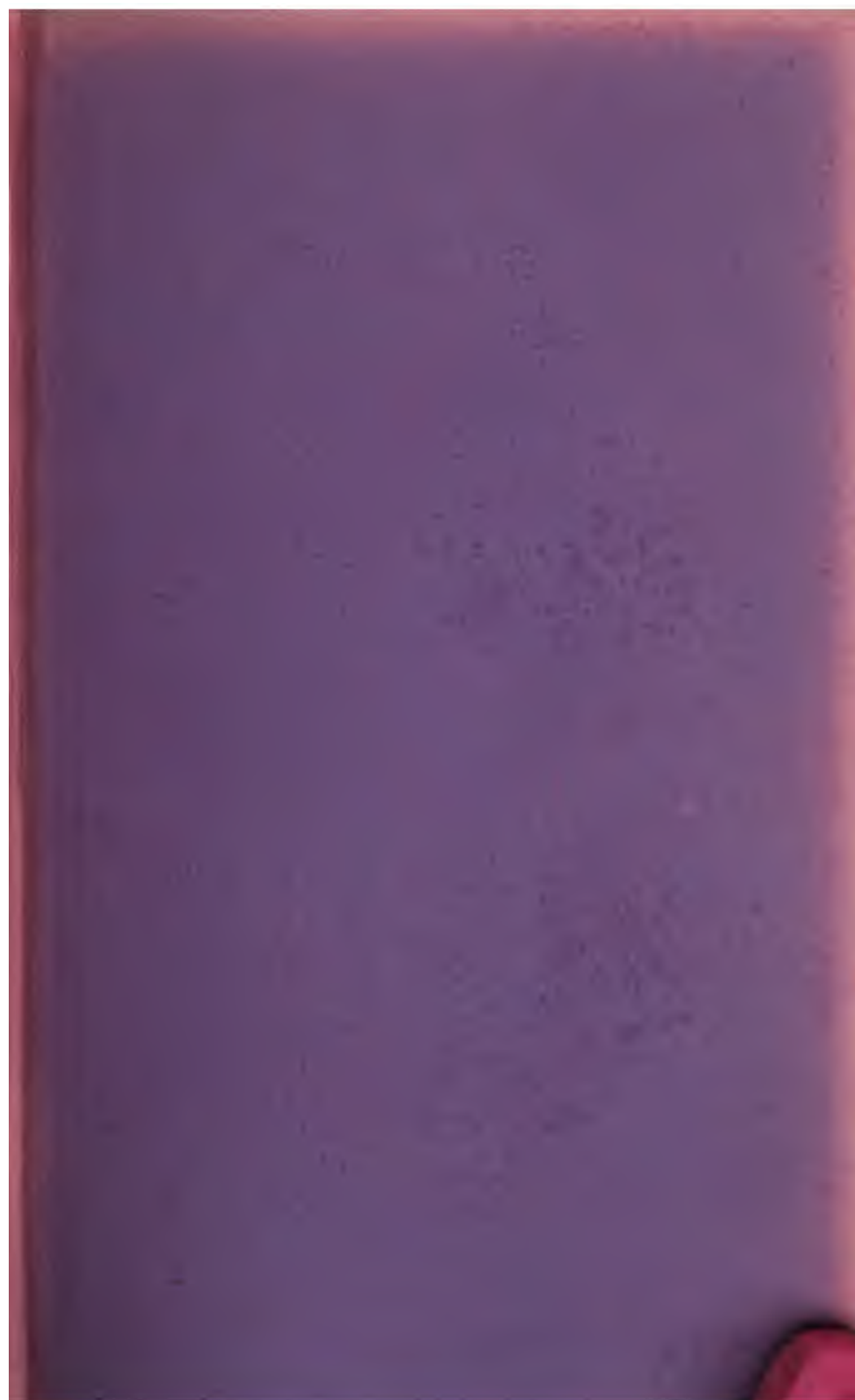
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THE
JEALOUS WIFE.



BY

MISS. PARDOE,

AUTHOR OF

"THE LIFE OF MARIE DE MEDICIS,"

&c., &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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TO
CATHERINE AND PENELOPE,
THESE VOLUMES
ARE VERY AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED,
BY THEIR ATTACHED FRIEND
THE AUTHOR.



600056555W





—*none* have ever done so with impunity since the commencement of my career. If you doubt this fact, you have only to inquire of your mother.”

“Oh ! pray, Mr. Trevanion;” expostulated a nervous voice, issuing from amid a mass of costly shawls, and from the depths of a lounging chair; “let no appeal be made to me. It is bad enough to have my quiet disturbed by this altercation between you and Ida, without being required to interfere in it.”

“Altercation, Madam ! What do you understand by the word altercation ? You surely cannot comprehend its significance. There can be no altercation between a father and his child. The bare idea of such a thing is preposterous !”

“Well, perhaps it is. Substitute any other term you please. It is quite indifferent to me.” And the complicated mass of drapery quivered for an instant, and then became once more motionless.

“Idiot ! *woman* !” muttered the head of

the family, as he paced slowly across the floor; then once more pausing before his daughter, who stood partially supported by a table on which her hand rested, he continued more audibly:—"You see, Miss Trevanion, that you must not calculate even upon the *powerful* protection of your mother. She disclaims all interference, and she is right; it *could* have done no good, and it *might* have done much evil." There was an ugly sneer about the corners of his mouth as he spoke, but it was unperceived by the young lady, who had, from the commencement of the discussion, kept her eyes riveted upon a book of engravings which lay open near her.

"I trust that I require no protection, when I venture to urge the happiness of my future life on my own father;" was the calm rejoinder of the lofty beauty, who seemed as resolute of will as her parent; and, as she spoke, her steady gaze, for the first time, rested upon his flushed and angry countenance.

Very beautiful, in truth, was the face thus

lifted to his, although the freshness of girlhood had evidently passed away to give place to the rich loveliness of that next phase of female attraction, when every charm is ripened into full perfection ; and the mind impresses a new power, unknown to mere thoughtless, unreflecting youth. Miss Trevanion had attained her twenty-sixth year ; her intellect was fully developed ; and a shade of her father's firmness gave additional expression to the large dark eyes and lofty brow, from which the raven hair was swept back in rich and massy folds. While Mrs. Trevanion crouched and cowered before the displeasure of her lord, his daughter stood erect. As she had said, the happiness of her whole life (according to her own view of the case) was at stake ; and she was evidently prepared to maintain her legitimate position to the utmost.

“ You know, Ida, that I cannot brook opposition ”—was the next evasive remark of the old gentleman.

“ Nor do I ever seek to offer any, as you

are well aware, Sir, when the point to be contested is of slight importance; but on this occasion ——”

“Well, Miss Trevanion, on this occasion? Where are your rational reasons for such ill-timed rebellion? You are ambitious, indeed, if a peer of the realm will not satisfy your vanity.”

The beauty shrugged her shoulders.

“I should not ask so much.”

“Ha! I understand;” thundered Mr. Trevanion, hurriedly resuming his walk; “you are in love—*You!* A rare jest, truly, but a dangerous one. Have I not warned you from your girlhood to avoid all follies of that nature until they had received my sanction?”

“You have.”

“And how have you obeyed my commands?”

“As a woman ever does, until her heart teaches her that she is a free agent. I scorn all subterfuge. Had you addressed me in another tone, I might have regretted that it was

not in my power to fulfil your wishes. As it is ——”

“Pray, proceed, Miss Trevanion—pray, proceed.”

“You have spared me that regret, Sir.”

“Ha! Indeed! Well, then, listen to *me*. You are our only child—*my* only child—but that fact shall avail you little, if you thus resolutely thwart my views. My uncle has a son. I hate them both, as you well know, and I have cause to do so; but, sooner than that my wealth should go to enrich the pauper whom you have chosen to accept as a suitor, that boy, detested as he is, shall be my heir.”

A deep flush mantled on the cheek of his listener for a moment, but it faded as suddenly as it had risen, and she stood calm and unmoved as before.

“Yes;” pursued Mr. Trevanion passionately; “you do not require to be told to-day how bitterly I have, through life, resented the arrogance of my more fortunate relatives. How, the son of a younger son, I was insulted

by the grudging offers of assistance which were to be doled out to me, in order to secure, at least, the means of existence to a poor relation—a berth on board an Indiaman, or the honour of carrying the colours in a regiment of foot—with full powers to make my own way when I was thus generously started in life. Law, Physic, or Divinity, were too costly to be thought of; they required previous training; and education involved expense. You know, also, how I disdained such pitiful assistance, and threw myself into commerce, in order to attain independence by my own unassisted efforts.”

“And you acted nobly!” was the murmured rejoinder.

“Thank you; it is at least consolatory that I have earned the approval of my own child; of the daughter, who, as I once hoped and believed, would have been enriched by my degradation—for that, as I have never forgotten, was the term applied by my aristocratic kinsman to my resolve to suffice to myself—but as you, Miss

Trevanion, have willed it otherwise, I here solemnly declare, that should you obstinately adhere to your present insane project, I will leave all that I possess to Sir Jasper's son and heir."

"In that case, Sir;" said the lady steadily; "I must follow your example, and endeavour to suffice to myself."

"Be it so. Then you resolutely refuse to accept the hand of Lord Downmere?"

"I do."

"You had better take time to reflect."

"The question requires no reflection. I cannot sacrifice myself to the mere empty vanity of rank."

"You prefer beggary?"

"Decidedly—with a husband, whom I could respect."

"You have more taste for the cotton gown of a pauper than the coronet of a countess?"

"Beyond all doubt—if I can wear it with more honour to myself."

"Ha!" groaned the irritated father; "this

comes of an ill-assorted union—The mother's blood! The mother's blood!"

"Now really, Mr. Trevanion;" exclaimed the nervous voice of the closely-enveloped figure in the lounging chair; "you have no right to blame me for Ida's obstinacy; I am sure that I am as angry with her as you can be, for her folly in refusing the poor dear Earl; and, therefore, it is not generous in you to remind me that my father was only a merchant; for you well know that without his gold——"

"Silence, Madam!" shouted the exasperated man; "Are you, too, about to lecture me? Is it not enough that Miss Trevanion presumes to oppose her will to mine, without your forcing upon me the unpalatable fact that I found it expedient to further my fortunes by marrying your father's daughter?"

"I am sure, Mr. Trevanion——"

"You are sure of nothing, Madam; how *can* you be so, when even *I* am thwarted and baffled at every turn? Be satisfied. I have bestowed on you one of the oldest, if not pre-

cisely one of the noblest, names in England : but still I cannot expect that you should feel as I do, the disgrace which this disobedient girl desires to bring upon a proud and ancient family."

"You might allow me to speak:" whimpered the weak and trembling woman.

"You might speak till doomsday, were you likely to do so to any purpose;" was the conciliating reply; "but I am now talking seriously to your daughter, and your idle interference is mistimed."

"Permit me to replace your cushion, Mama;" said Miss Trevanion, as she observed that, in her agitation, her mother had sunk helplessly back in an uncomfortable position; but her attention was declined. The querulous woman waved her away with a repulsive gesture, as she impatiently murmured: "It is all your own fault. Why do you not marry Lord Downmere, and put an end to this disagreeable dispute? I am sure I only wish that I had been so lucky as to——Well, well, it is no use to talk of that

now; but pray let there be an end of all this."

Miss Trevanion turned away; there was a strange expression of blended contempt and pity on her proud lip; but she made no reply.

The persons whom we have thus unceremoniously introduced to the reader, were, although so closely connected, as ill-suited to each other as it was well possible for three human beings to be. Mr. Trevanion, the only son of a younger brother—who had, in early life and before he had adopted any settled profession, been so imprudent as to elope with the penniless daughter of an Irish peer, and to drag on a dependent and aimless existence under the roof of his more fortunate brother, the fourteenth baronet—was early left an orphan, his mother having died in giving him birth; while her husband only lived to see him reach his twelfth year. Accustomed, from his earliest infancy, to know himself rather tolerated than loved, by his austere uncle, the unfortunate boy, young as he was, felt all the importance of his

loss. In his cares and sorrows, that weak but affectionate father had been his refuge—in his pastimes, his tutor and his playmate—and as he followed him to the family vault, where he was laid to rest with the pomp and pageantry deemed necessary by Sir Jasper to the dignity of the name he bore, the desolate orphan was at once aware that all the love of which he had hitherto been the object throughout the whole of his brief existence, was buried in the grave with his last parent.

It was a frightful moment, and a painful conviction for the boy; it robbed his mind of its freshness, and his heart of its youth. Once he glanced up into the face of his dreaded uncle, but his eye suddenly fell, as in the stern countenance which was half averted from him, he read neither sympathy nor grief. Sir Jasper looked, indeed, like a man carved in stone; and the imperturbable composure of his features appeared to mock the mourning cloak in which he was enveloped. There was no encouragement in that marble face; and

the glance of the orphan returned to fasten, with even more avidity than before, upon the coffin beside him.

On his way to the church, even the presence of his stern relative had failed to moderate his grief, and he had wept as the young ever weep, with all the violence of despair; but, as the remains of his fond father were lowered out of his sight, a change came over his spirit which was destined to influence his character through life. When he turned to leave the spot where all his affections lay buried, and resumed his place beside Sir Jasper in the mourning coach—his eyes were as dry as though they had never known a tear, and a deep colour was burning on his cheeks. A word of kindness, the merest approach to a caress, might have melted the rising bitterness, and crushed the demon that was tugging at his heart; but these were not vouchsafed. The baronet sat coldly and magnificently silent; and the homeward drive was performed without the interchange of a single sentence.

When they reached the Hall, its master alighted, and immediately shut himself into his study; while the bereaved boy, totally overlooked even by the menials about him, in his turn retreated to his solitary room, there to brood alike over the past, the present, and, it may even be, the future. He had heard his uncle, by the death-bed of his last parent, pledge himself not to desert the orphan about to be confided to his compassion; but he remembered with a burning and indignant heart, how tardily and grudgingly that promise had been extorted by the supplications of the dying man. He strove to recal one demonstration of interest or regard towards himself, displayed by his enforced guardian from his childhood to that very hour; but he strove in vain. The motherless infant, the child of tears, who drew his first sustenance from the breast of a stranger, had failed to awaken one feeling of commiseration or sympathy in the heart of Sir Jasper Trevanion. The baronet had tolerated his

brother, not only because his own credit in the eyes of his fellow-men forbade that he should suffer that brother to starve ; but also because his very imprudence had never tempted him to tarnish the dignity of his family. His marriage had been an act of reckless folly, almost amounting to madness, in the eyes of the fortunate possessor of twelve thousand a year, but still it had entailed no disgrace upon his name ; and it was at least satisfactory to be able to present a Lady Katherine Trevanion, to the neighbouring squirearchy ; a circumstance to which may probably be attributed the fact that, instead of settling a sufficient income upon his less well-portioned brother, which might have enabled him to choose his own place of residence, and to enjoy the modest comforts of his own home, Sir Jasper insisted that the helpless couple should reside under his roof ; and accompanied the expression of his will by a declaration that, should they decline to do so, no further assistance need be anticipated from himself.

Such were the circumstances under which Mr. Trevanion and his pretty, silly bride, became the inmates of the paternal mansion; where, as already stated, Sir Jasper had, even after the death of the Lady Katherine, tolerated his brother, partly from duty, and still more, perhaps, from habit; but the boy had been from the first moment of his existence, odious to the selfish and cold-hearted baronet. In the first place, his birth had caused the death of his mother, whose lively absurdities, and buoyant spirits, had served to enliven the previous stately dulness of the old hall; while, superadded to this privation (for the presence and companionship of the lively lady had become necessary to the comfort of the saturnine man), a lurking jealousy nestled at his heart. He—the representative of his family—was childless; while his brother—his penniless and dependent brother, to whom his will was law, and his protection existence—had given an heir to the house of which he was himself the head; while he had not even yet encountered a

woman worthy, in his opinion, to share his fortunes.

And thus the boy had grown up beside him, unloved ; an object of aversion and avoidance.

And the lad knew and felt this, although he was unable to fathom its cause. He remembered that he had never been addressed by his uncle, save in reproof ; that his childish caresses had been repulsed, and his boyish errors visited with merciless chastisement ; and bitterly did he writhe beneath the consciousness that he was now hopelessly dependent upon one, whom he both disliked and feared.

“ What will become of me ! ” groaned the unhappy orphan, as he paced, alone and unheeded, the floor of his little chamber ; “ Why could I not have died with my father ? Who, in this wide desolate world, cares for me now ? ”

Well might he ask himself the dreary question.

It was late in the evening before any one appeared to have remembered his existence ; and then he was summoned by a servant to

the housekeeper's room, in which he was accustomed to take his repasts; but his heart was too full; he required no food; and he said so quietly and briefly.

"Nonsense, Master Hubert;" was the retort of the messenger; "be a man, and make up your mind to what can't be mended. Fasting won't bring back the dead."

"I know it;" said the boy; "nor tears; and therefore I have ceased to shed them."

"That is reasonable at all events," replied the man; "so come down at once, if you don't wish to catch a scolding from Mrs. Pearson, for making her wait."

"She need not wait;" said Hubert; "I require nothing more to-night."

And he no sooner found himself once more alone, than he flung himself upon his bed, and resumed his musings.

For an entire month the orphan never once met his uncle; nor, in so far as he could ascertain from the attendants, had Sir Jasper even pronounced his name, or alluded to his exist-

ence. He was no longer directed to meet the curate, who had hitherto officiated as his tutor, in the breakfast-room, when it was vacated by his uncle; no longer occupied by daily task-work; but was left at perfect liberty to spend day after day according to his own caprice. And that caprice was a strange one in so young a boy; for, shunning the bright sunshine, and the wholesome avocations of his age, his hours were passed either in the dark recesses of the dense wood which formed the western boundary of the Trevanion property, or in the gothic picture-gallery, among the grim portraits of his ancestors.

One by one he paused before them, and gazed upon each, as intently as though the happiness of his future life depended upon his accurate knowledge of every separate feature; but, more than all, he studied the female portraits—from the stiff and stately dame of far-off centuries to the courtly and sylphic figure of his own mother. While thus engaged, the brow of the silent boy would occasionally flush, and

his eye kindle, as he remembered that he, too, was a Trevanion; but the paroxysm of excitement never lasted long, and he soon sank back into his habitual gloom.

Thus had the month gone by; and, in that brief interval, the orphan, abandoned thus absolutely to himself, had ceased to pine either for sympathy or companionship. He came and went like one obeying the impulse of a dream; joyless, tearless, and alone. But he was to be no longer permitted to indulge in this negative happiness; for at the termination of the period named, he was suddenly summoned to the presence of his uncle, and he obeyed the command without the quickening of a single pulse. What had he to fear, or to lose?

“Come in, Sir, and close the door behind you;” was the greeting he received; and he had no sooner obeyed the order, than the baronet pursued in a stern tone; “You are now of an age to understand that you cannot spend your life in idleness, wandering like a poacher about the woods; or dawdling, like a gaping

girl, through the galleries of the Hall. Moreover, your presence here must ere long be importunate, as you will one day comprehend. I supported your father in his uselessness, because he was my brother; but you have no such claim on my forbearance. Nevertheless, as I made to him a promise that I would not abandon you, I have no intention to falsify my word; and I have accordingly sent for you to state that you will, three days hence, be accompanied by one of my servants to the North, where you will remain four years in a school which I have selected, in order to complete your education. At the termination of that period, you will be—or ought to be—competent to uphold with credit to yourself the honour of the name you bear—an honour, young Sir, which saved your father from beggary—either in the army or navy; and I give you your choice of either profession.”

“I object to both,” was the sturdy reply.

“You object!” echoed the baronet, startled

into something like emotion by so unlooked-for a rejoinder ; “*you*—a boy of barely twelve years of age—tell me that you shall oppose my pleasure. I say, Hubert Trevanion, that I will be obeyed.”

The lad remained silent.


“You do well, Sir;” pursued the angry voice ; “not to repeat your rebellion. But enough of this. You have heard my decision, and it is immutable. Go and make your preparations, whatever they may be ; our interview is at an end.”

The orphan needed no second bidding; with a silent bow he left the room; but as he slowly traversed the gallery which led from his uncle’s apartments, his clenched hands and heaving chest proclaimed the tempest within. His boyhood was now wholly swept away; the elasticity of his spirit was crushed; he had begun his wrestle with the realities of the world; and a dark, hard feeling, to which his tender age should have been a stranger, was working within him.

CHAPTER II.

UNCLE AND NEPHEW.

THE school to which Hubert Trevanion was conducted by his uncle's serving-man, was by no means calculated to inspire any regret on the boy's part, at his abrupt exodus from his inhospitable home ; nor had Sir Jasper neglected to provide him with a wardrobe suitable to his station in life. There had been no leave-taking, it is true, between him and his nephew, but this omission was grateful to the orphan, who had few thanks, and less affection to offer to his repelling kinsman ; and yet, nevertheless, as he saw his conductor on his return to the Hall, disappear at the end of the poplar avenue which formed the approach



to the house his heart sank within him, at the conviction that he stood alone among strangers, with whom he had neither feeling nor sympathy in common. He was, however, soon aroused from the sombre reverie into which he had fallen by the voice of Dr. Birchmore, the principal of the establishment, by whom he was led into the refectory where his future companions were assembled at supper, and where his own place was assigned to him.

The personal beauty of the boy had interested the feelings of the worthy Doctor who was, moreover, not insensible to the credit which his academy would derive from the circumstance of his numbering among his pupils the nephew and ward of one of the oldest baronets in England ; and it was accordingly with the greatest gentleness and indulgence, that he commenced his investigation of the progress of his previous studies. That the result was far from satisfactory, will readily be surmised, so long a time having elapsed since the lad had opened a book, or even be-

stowed a thought upon the lessons of the reverend divine who had formerly been his preceptor at the Hall ; but, despite the disappointment which this circumstance induced in the breast of the astonished pedagogue, he was encouraged by the evident intelligence of his young pupil, and his voluntary assurance that no application should be wanting on his own part, to retrieve the lost time.

Nor was it; for Hubert Trevanion had at least arrived at the valuable knowledge that, without education, he could never achieve the independence for which he yearned ; and ere long his assiduity and talent became the proverb of the school. Still, he was not popular, as his silent, and somewhat sullen habits, disgusted his playmates ; nor was it until he had excited a host of enemies, and fought his way manfully through the school, reckless alike of the age or strength of his opponents, that he succeeded in enforcing the respect of those to whom he had refused alike companionship and regard. This accomplished, he was allowed to indulge

his own tastes and pursuits in peace; "the baronet," as he was sneeringly designated by the little community, ceasing by degrees to excite either curiosity or anger; and while peals of laughter, and shouts of merriment resounded from the playground, he strolled alone and unheeded under the trees by which it was bounded, or flung himself down in some shady nook to study and reflect at ease.

Thus he made no friends, nor did he need them; and for all companionship he sought only the society of the ushers, three of whom being foreigners, he rapidly acquired the modern languages, and a certain acquaintance with the habits and feelings of other countries. And so the four years wore on. As during the vacations, he was the only pupil left at the establishment—the portly Doctor and his precise but kind-hearted wife, in their turn abandoned the classic shade of their academic home, in order to visit their respective families; and Hubert Trevanion was, to his infinite gratification, consigned to the sole guardian-

ship of the German master, who, being as friendless as himself, had known no other home than that of Dr. Birchmore for many long and laborious years.

Simple and sincere, Herr Hauffman was as very a child in heart as the youngest of his class; but he was, nevertheless, a man of deep and varied information, and possessed of considerable skill in imparting the knowledge he had acquired. No companion could, therefore, have been more acceptable to the self-centred and eager Hubert, who, while his more fortunate comrades were revelling in the delights of family ties and paternal indulgence, was storing his mind hour by hour, and feeling his intellect expand almost without an effort.

How brief appeared to him those weeks of tranquil and undisturbed existence! and how heartily did he sympathize in the regrets expressed by his fellow pupils on their return to their old toils, and their old duties; for then, once more, he too was compelled to

resume the monotonous routine of the classes, and to spend hours poring over the more abstruse branches of education for which he had no taste, and in which he felt no interest. The dead languages, the Latin verses, and the dull lore of buried ages, so dear to the scholar, and so soon to be forgotten by the busy, active, ambitious citizen of the day, were alike wearisome to him ; the mind of the boy had already foreshadowed the future career of the man ; and, while he grasped at every species of knowledge which might tend to his advancement in society, he gave but reluctant attention to that which could only be profitable in the closet.

Thus, when he at length terminated his scholastic career, Hubert Trevanion was declared to be the most accomplished linguist and the best mathematician who had ever quitted the establishment ; while it was with regret that the principal found himself compelled to temper his approbation by the admission that he was, on the other hand, very

deficient in that classic lore, so essential, as the Doctor sententiously observed, to the elevated station in life which he would soon be called upon to fill. On the whole, however, the indulgent pedagogue confessed himself proud of his pupil; while the gentle and kind-hearted Herr Hauffman parted from him with tears of unfeigned regret.

On his arrival at the Hall, the orphan at once discovered the motive which had impelled his uncle to declare that his residence there had ceased to be desirable; when, as he crossed the threshold of the drawing-room, he saw a lady seated in the deep bay of the western window, busily engaged at a tapestry-frame, while three spaniels were lying upon their several cushions near her chair; who no sooner, however, became aware of his presence than they rushed upon him open-mouthed, as if to resent his intrusion.

“For shame, Flora; be quiet, Dash; come here instantly, Fido;” expostulated their mistress, as the tall, handsome lad calmly made

his way towards her, regardless of the uproar ;
“I am really ashamed of you ! Do not be
afraid, Mr. Hubert ; the dear pets never bite,
it is merely noise.”

“I am by no means alarmed, Madam,” was
the quiet reply ; “and am sorry that I have
been the innocent cause of creating such a
disturbance, by intruding myself upon you so
abruptly ; but I was informed that I should
find Sir Jasper Trevanion in this apartment.”

“Sir Jasper,” rejoined the lady, without
rising from her seat ; “is, I believe, in the
library.—Flora, leave those wools alone ; you
will choke yourself, darling.—Do you particu-
larly wish to see Sir Jasper, Mr. Hubert ?—
or can I communicate to him what you desire
to say ?”

“As you please, Madam ;” said the orphan
bitterly ; “I merely intended to inform him that,
according to his orders, I have returned to
Trevanion Hall.”

“In that case, he need not be disturbed, as
that is a matter-of-course. You will, I believe,

find your old room prepared for you ; at least, I gave orders to that effect to my house-keeper."

"I am obliged to you, Madam, and shall at once avail myself of your attention."

"But, before you leave me, Mr. Hubert, it will be as well to mention that henceforth, whatever you may require, you must apply to myself. I have undertaken to relieve Sir Jasper from all unnecessary trouble and exertion ; and it will therefore be quite useless to make any appeal to him."

"I have no inclination to do so, Madam."

"You are right, for it would be of no avail ; and now that we understand each other, I will not detain you longer." A cold bend of the head, and a glance towards the door of the apartment, followed her words ; and amid another storm of yelping and barking, Hubert withdrew from the presence of his new aunt.

A marvellous change had indeed come over the old Hall. The man of marble had become

plastic as wax beneath the firm and determined will of a stronger mind than his own. The arrogant head was bowed ; the haughty spirit lowered.

Within six months of his brother's death, Sir Jasper Trevanion had married the wealthy widow of an Indian Nabob, who had returned to England, with a colossal fortune, and an exhausted constitution, only to die and make way for his successor. Lady Trevanion had been a beauty, and was still a fine woman ; but the long habit of command had rendered her imperious, self-willed, and despotic ; while the consciousness of her enormous wealth had induced her with an arrogance which would have sat ungracefully even upon a duchess, and which the remembrance of her obscure origin, (for the well-dowered bride of the high-born Sir Jasper could not trace back her lineage beyond the last generation,) had altogether failed to diminish. The cold and haughty representative of the Trevanions had been dazzled by her magnificence, and captivated by her

person ; while the lady herself, with that yearning for a title which is one of the most patent weaknesses of a vulgar mind, after some hesitation, had consented to bestow herself and her rupees upon the man whose greatest pride had hitherto centred in the antiquity of his race.

Pompous was the display made at the marriage. The county journals had appropriated whole columns to the details of the magnificent rejoicings consequent upon the event. All the county had left cards at the hall ; and all the gossips had been busy with the diamonds and cashmeres of the bride ; but it was not long ere the baronet himself discovered that the rod by which he was henceforth to be ruled, however thickly gilded, was not the less a rod of iron. The man of marble had found a mate of steel ; the contest was an unequal one ; for while the nature of the husband was too haughty for contention, that of the wife was too overbearing for concession ; and thus, by the time that the happy couple were thoroughly

established under their own roof, the question of supremacy was decided; and Lady Trevanion, whose accumulated thousands remained under her exclusive control, reigned undisputed mistress of the establishment.

All these circumstances were soon made known to Hubert by the indignant Mrs. Pearson; who, accustomed for half a life-time to the lofty carelessness of her aristocratic master, and the negative rule of the trifling Lady Katherine, (whom, in imitation of Sir Jasper, she revered for her high birth,) could ill brook the uncompromising sway of the new mistress of the mansion; "A nobody;" as she emphatically declared; "whose name would never have been seen in print had she not cast her spell over the proudest race in the land. However, Master Hubert;" she continued exultingly; "it is only for a time, and you must have patience; you will be Sir Hubert Trevanion yet, as all the old servants hope and desire. *You* have good blood in you on both sides; and what should be, will be. Your uncle,

poor dear man ! married for an heir—he had better have contented himself with the one that providence had already provided for him—and you see what has come of it. Here is my lady, three years a wife, and not yet a mother ; nor ever likely to be, it's my notion. There's no end to her money, they say ; but it's little good it is to us while Sir Jasper has not the handling of it. However, as I have heard that she has no relations that she cares to own, because she doesn't dare to introduce them to her new connexions, it may one day be yours, and you may be a great man yet."

"Without her help, I trust, my good Pearson," replied the boy, as the blood mantled over his brow.

"With all my heart : without her help, till she sees and feels that you do not need it, and then it will be given less grudgingly ; but until that day comes, it is weary work here, Master Hubert. The only comfort we have now, Tomkins the butler, and I, and Sir Jasper's man, is to talk over old times ; and

often and often do we remember the days when we let you wander about, sad and lonely, and wished you away, that the sight of you mightn't anger and worry our poor master, little thinking what was to come next! But that's all over now; and it's you we look to when we hope for better times. You haven't been to the picture-gallery yet? Well, don't go; for there you'll find my lady, full length, covered with precious stones, and with all her horrid dogs about her, hanging side by side with your own dear mother, who *was* a lady, and had always a kind word and a merry smile for every one about her. Don't go, Master Hubert; it will make your heart ache."

"I will not." said the lad bitterly.

"You're not here for long, I take it;" pursued the garrulous old woman; "for my lady can't abide your name, and wanted Sir Jasper to send you straight off to sea from school."

"I am not going to sea." said the youth resolutely.

"Not going to sea! Why there's a vessel

bound for the Indies all ready to take you on board; my lady has made up her mind."

"And so have I." was the calm rejoinder.

"Then mercy deliver us!" exclaimed his companion; "for we shall have such a storm in the old Hall as it has not seen for many a day. But I'm glad to hear you say so, for all that. I hate such kidnapping work. Sending you to sea, in the hope that you'll be drowned, or shipwrecked, or cast ashore, or something of that sort, and never heard of again; and all because she's jealous of you."

"She has little cause to be so." said the orphan sadly.

"I don't know that, Mr. Hubert;" replied the housekeeper significantly; "It ain't so pleasant, after all, for a woman of that stamp, who has nothing to be proud of but her gold, to see a fine young fellow like you ready to tear the lining out of her money-bags; and she without chick or child of her own to stop you. No, no; it can't be pleasant, and that's the truth of it; for, as sure as my name's

Margaret, many and many's the prayer that her proud ladyship has put up to have a young baronet of her own ; but no one prayed with her, I've a notion ; not even Sir Jasper himself, who, poor dear man, has had enough of her race already, if I don't mistake. Once on a time, full two years back, she had a notion of some such thing, and a pretty fuss there was at the Hall, I can tell you ; but it came to nothing, as might have been expected. A young baronet, indeed ! ' Just as if baronets were made of such stuff as that ! "

And Mrs. Pearson curled her lip, as though the very idea of such a catastrophe was too ridiculous to be entertained for a moment.

" And my uncle—Sir Jasper ?"—said the boy ; " How comes it that his proud spirit submits so tamely to her despotism ? "

" Aye, there it is ; " responded the old lady ; ' that's what puzzles us all—man, woman, and child. You know, Master Hubert, that there wasn't a prouder nor a sterner man than Sir Jasper for miles round. At home or

abroad, he was always the same; caring neither for lords nor squires; but bearing himself, as he had every right to do, as the head of one of the ancientest families in England—and now look at him! Never does he venture to say ‘aye,’ when my lady sees fit to say ‘nay;’ and there he sits for hours shut up alone in his library, doing of nothing—she takes good care of that—but poring over a parcel of mouldy old books that had been quiet enough upon the shelves for years, while she overlooks the steward’s accounts, and arranges the house expenses, and receives the rents—aye, and raises them too whenever she is so minded, as though she had been a born Trevanion, a lady in her own right, and had married a beggar who hadn’t a word to say in anything.”

“My uncle must be strangely changed”—observed Hubert moodily.

“Right enough, my dear boy; he *is* strangely changed—body and mind too. And oh, Master Hubert;” continued the faithful old servant, as large tears swelled in her eyes;

"we sometimes fear—Mr. Tomkins and I—that the poor dear gentleman may not be able to hold out against it; and should he go, what would become of the old Hall, and of all of us."

"You would have me for a master." said the lad with a kindling eye.

"Aye, but the widow—the widow would be left, you know; and she would keep you out of your own while she could."

The boy smiled scornfully.

"At all events she would take care of her money;" persisted the housekeeper; "you would see none of that. There are other husbands to be bought besides Sir Jasper—and then he will have suffered all this for nothing."

"He has, in any case, no one to blame but himself." was the sententious reply.

"That's true enough, too, Master Hubert;" said his companion; "but our mistakes are none the more easy to bear because we find them out too late. What's done, can't be undone; and here we are, the laughing-stock of

all the county, for what I know to the contrary—my honoured master and all.

“Is it intended, do you know, Mrs. Pearson, that I should see Sir Jasper during my stay?”

“Perhaps yes, perhaps no ;” replied the old dame oracularly ; “all will depend upon how my lady takes to you ; and you will have hard cards to play, I can tell you.”

“I shall play none.”

“Well, Master Hubert, we shall see. Them that live longest, see most ; but you must not forget that all will depend upon her ladyship.”

“I never shall.”

“Why bless the lad, what can you do of yourself? You are but a young thing yet, and have no one to look to but her.”

“I am at least old enough ;” said Hubert with a touch of his uncle’s haughtiness, “to revolt against tyranny. I would not submit to it from my father’s brother ; I shall assuredly defy it in the person of my uncle’s wife.”

“It will be of no use ;” sighed Mrs. Pearson ; “Sir Jasper tried it you may be

sure, and you see how the struggle ended. Take an old woman's advice, Master Hubert ; keep well with my lady ; don't contradict her, but let her have everything her own way ; it will only be for a time."

"I thank you for your good-will, my old friend ;" said the orphan ; "but I will make no such promise. Ha ! there goes the dressing-bell ; and now I shall soon be made aware whether I am to be honoured with a seat at my uncle's table, or consigned once more to your kindness."

CHAPTER III.

A DEPARTURE.

STRANGE, and even affecting, was the meeting between the uncle and nephew in the spacious and lordly dining-room of the old Hall, as, having received no warning to the contrary, Hubert Trevanion calmly passed the threshold, and advanced to greet its master. Cold indeed was Sir Jasper still, but he was no longer stern; and the stripling detected in his eye a yearning which he had never before seen there, as, for the first time, their hands met; but nevertheless no word of tenderness accompanied the look which lingered on his countenance for a moment, and then melted

away ; he asked no question—he betrayed no interest in his young relative ; but languidly resumed his seat, as though he had done all that could be required of him, and eschewed further responsibility.

Lady Trevanion, in all the splendour of a *parvenue*, had already taken the head of her table, whence she glanced at her unwelcome guest with a haughty eye and a lowering brow, as though she already recognised in the calm, self-dependent youth, a formidable antagonist ; and thus the meal commenced in comfortless and threatening silence. The servants moved noiselessly over the costly carpet, and performed their duties with the quiet vigilance of well-tutored automatons ; the successive courses were served and disappeared—and Hubert remarked that, while his uncle ate sparingly and in silence, the lady of the mansion partook largely of the luxuries before her, although constantly evincing displeasure, and affecting to cavil at their quality. At length, the cheerless repast came to a close ; the

dessert was placed upon the table, and the servants withdrew, evidently to the discomfort of Sir Jasper, who, although still silent, betrayed a fidgetiness wholly at variance with the calm self-centred manner for which he had formerly been so conspicuous ; while Hubert, who had nerved himself for every contingency, remained impassive, coldly awaiting the pleasure of his companions.

As he had anticipated, it was the lady who took the initiative. " I presume, Mr. Hubert Trevanion ;" she said superciliously, as she carefully arranged an emerald bracelet by which her left arm was encircled ; " that you do not anticipate a long sojourn under the roof of your uncle."

" I leave its term in my uncle's hands, Madam."

Lady Trevanion smiled, but it was not a pleasant smile ; it said, as plainly as any words could have done that Sir Jasper was no longer omnipotent in his own house ; " Down, Fido ! Have I not yet taught you that I will be

obeyed? For shame, to set so bad an example.—You do right, young sir”—she was now speaking to her husband’s nephew—“to disclaim any will of your own in such a case, as it saves trouble to all parties, Sir Jasper having made up his mind upon the subject. You have already been a great expence to him; a very great expence; and although, so long as he remained a bachelor, he was, of course, at liberty to dispose of his property as he saw fit, he has now other duties to perform, and he is prepared to act accordingly. Not;” pursued her ladyship with ill-bred eagerness; “that his marriage with me has impoverished him—far from it—very far from it—but he, like myself, is weary of dependents. He bore with your father as a duty, and with your mother as your father’s wife; and with you, while you were still a child; all very right and commendable, no doubt—I do not mean to reproach him. I would have done as much for my own relations, had they required it.”

"It was fortunate alike for them and for yourself, that you had none, Madam;" was the composed reply of the lad, as he remembered the tale so lately told to him by his humble friend in the housekeeper's room.

The lady flushed crimson. The first stone had been flung, and had hit its mark; but, like an able general, she scorned to acknowledge, or even to recognize the check, and, with a still more bitter smile, she continued;

"Your father, Mr. Hubert Trevanion, was as I have heard, a mere inane and indolent man of fashion, and your mother the penniless daughter of a peer—poverty wedded to helplessness; but that was not your fault, my poor boy; and be assured that neither Sir Jasper nor I mean to upbraid you with it—"

"I can believe so, Madam;" said the orphan, calmly meeting the hard eye which was fastened upon him; "and even had it been otherwise, I should have felt no shame in hearing myself rebuked on such a subject. Dependent as I may be, for the moment, I can

proudly trace my descent for centuries on both sides ; and feel richer in my apparent poverty with such a consciousness, than had I been born to inherit thousands, bequeathed to me by accident, and of which I should feel ashamed to trace the source."

"Sir Jasper Trevanion, am I to be insulted in my own house by a stripling?" demanded the lady vehemently.

"Hubert, you forget yourself"—gasped out the baronet.

"In what way, Sir?" asked the lad coldly ;
"I have but given utterance to feelings which you cannot do otherwise than respect. You, the descendant of a long line of ancestors, will surely understand my reverence for high birth, and sympathise in my contempt for wealth which has no illustration less plebeian than its own vileness."

"Sir Jasper ;" exclaimed his wife passionately ; "this boy shall not remain another hour under my roof. Hark'ye, young Sir, I nurse no vipers in my bosom. You know

best by whom you have been tutored ; and were it not that you bear your uncle's name, I would cast you off, to learn the worship which the world will pay to your high birth and proud descent without a penny to enforce your claim. As it is —— ”

“ I ask nothing of *you*, Madam,” said Hubert, as he rose from his seat ; “ I do not recognise either your power or your authority. I am the son of your husband's brother—the last of the race of Trevanion ; and should its present representative see fit to deny me his protection and support, I must abide by his decision—but I acknowledge no will save his—I will abide by no desertion save his own.”

“ Do you dare to brave me, Hubert Trevanion ? ”

“ I have no such desire, Madam. I simply question your right to decide my destiny.”

“ You are wrong, Hubert—very wrong,” interposed the baronet, evidently quailing beneath the anger of his wife ; “ you owe alike obedience and respect to Lady Trevanion.”

“ I am ever ready to render both, Sir, where they are due;” said the orphan with deep emotion; “ but I appeal to yourself whether I have been met by her ladyship in a manner to induce either? She, probably, thinks merely of my age, and regards me as a child bound only to do her bidding; but she can know little of my boyhood when she so argues; and you, Sir Jasper—you who received me from the hands of an indulgent and dying father,—you, at least, may convince her of her mistake. From the hour in which I lost my last parent I ceased to be a child, and grew, not so much by time as by trial. I had no youth, but sprang at once from the boy into the man. There were no home affections, no heart yearnings, to fling back my feelings upon others; I was alone—coldly, cheerlessly, frightfully alone—left to combat with my own passions, and failings, and necessities—given over to the purchased care of strangers—abandoned to the narrow sympathies of hired teachers, and uncongenial associates. You, at least, can

utter no reproach, for I am but what you yourself have made me."

"And this then;" exclaimed the lady, with a reproachful glance at her husband; "this is the boy of sixteen who was to bow to my will, and to know no pleasure but my own. Upon my word, Sir Jasper, I must compliment you upon your discrimination, and upon the admirable method in which you have reared your brother's son."

"We have been separated for four years," said the baronet deprecatingly.

"And will do well to separate once more for a longer period;" observed Lady Trevanion, as she rose in her turn; "at all events, Sir Jasper, you have only to choose between your nephew and your wife; for this young gentleman shall assuredly not remain under the same roof as myself."

"You know, my dear, that the vessel will sail within a fortnight," urged the master of the house.

"Until which period, Mr. Hubert must

be accommodated with a home elsewhere," was the haughty rejoinder.

"Pardon me, Sir;" interposed the youth firmly; "but, if I just now understood your meaning, you have it in contemplation to send me out of the country?"

"You are provided for," said the baronet nervously; "Lady Trevanion has procured for you a midshipman's berth on board an Indiaman which is shortly to sail; and has also had the kindness to interest in your favour some of her very influential connections in that country."

"Her Ladyship does me honour," replied Hubert bowing profoundly; "but I have no intention to embrace such a career, and no inclination to enter life under such auspices."

"Better and better!" sneered the irate lady; "and you will, perhaps, be so obliging as to inform Sir Jasper and myself of the precise nature of your future projects."

"Willingly, Madam; I had already expressed my utter aversion to both services,

and stated this distinctly to Sir Jasper, years ago—nor have I seen any cause to alter my decision. That I should not have the alternative of the learned professions, the nature of my education sufficiently evinced; and I have consequently left no effort untried, to fit myself for the only honourable career, which was left open to me.”

“And pray what may that be?”

“Commerce, Madam. I aspire to the respected name of an upright English merchant.”

“Trade, Sir!” exclaimed the baronet, thoroughly aroused from his apathy; “am I to understand that you would degrade the presumptive heir of the Trevanions into a trader?”

“Such is, in fact, my purpose.”

“You are a disgrace to your name, young man,” said the lady loftily.

“I regret, Madam, that you should be involved in that disgrace,” was the reply.

“I will not give you a shilling if you persist in such degradation,” gasped the baronet.

"I ask nothing," said the lad, although his heart quailed for a moment; "I am informed by a letter which was placed in my hands by my father on his death-bed, that I inherit certain jewels once belonging to my mother; and I will owe my existence to her bequest. I know not that I could apply it to a more pious purpose."

"They shall be delivered to you," said Sir Jasper coldly.

"A diamond mine, no doubt!" sneered Lady Trevanion, as she glanced at herself in a mirror; "one, however, which will be little missed, and may well be spared. I presume, Sir Jasper, that the young gentleman may at once take possession of his inheritance, and leave the Hall?"

"One moment"—faltered the baronet; "only one moment. You are mad, Hubert, thus to brave your family. Remember that you have no other home."

"Home, Sir!" echoed the stripling. "I have never known a home—I can never hope

for one, until I have earned it; and until I have done so, I must be content to find a resting-place among strangers."

"You talk like a child. Without means you cannot make your way—and though revolted by your disobedience, I will not turn you adrift upon the world to starve. You do not even know in what direction to bend your steps."

"Pardon me, Sir; I shall proceed immediately to London, where I shall dispose of my poor mother's jewels; and thence I shall at once make my way to Germany."

"And why to Germany?"

"Because I am assured of a welcome in the family of a firm, though humble friend, to whom I owe much more than I can ever repay; and, even should I fail to realize the hope which has been held out to me of a successful career in that country, the blessing of a welcome under any roof will amply repay me for subsequent disappointment."

"May I venture to inquire the name of

this valuable friend?" again demanded the baronet.

"Certainly. It is Herr Hauffman, the German professor at Dr. Birchmore's."

"An usher!" interposed Lady Trevanion, with a bitter laugh.

"Even so, Madam, if you prefer the term. An humble usher, who has long been to me a brother and a friend. A man who has coined his mind into wages, and nerved his heart to receive thankfully the salary won by his talents. I am proud of the regard which he has bestowed on me."

"You are lost, Hubert Trevanion!" groaned Sir Jasper; "It should have sufficed, young man, that you were born under this roof, to have preserved you from such grovelling companionships as these."

"Grovelling indeed!" echoed the lady sarcastically; "and now, Sir Jasper, have you heard enough? or are we to pass the evening in listening to the revelations of your hopeful nephew? Surely there need be no more waste

of words upon the subject. The young man has formed connexions for himself more desirable in his eyes than those which he rejects; and I see no reason why you should not leave him at liberty to cultivate them."

"You forget, Lady Trevanion, that he is the last of his race."

"I forget nothing, Sir;" was the sharp reply; "except that I have been insulted in your presence by one of your own blood, and that you have not deigned to chastise the offender."

"His only fitting punishment will be immediate exile from the home of his ancestors;" said Sir Jasper; but his lip quivered as the childless man suddenly remembered that he was, in order to conciliate his offended wife, about to banish, probably for ever, not only his brother's son, but what to his selfish nature was infinitely more sacred, his own presumptive heir and successor. What might be the fate of the lad, thus cast forth into a cold and heartless world by his natural protectors?

Struggle and hardship, contumely, and—it might even be—shame and death!

A clammy dew started to the brow of the baronet, and his head sank upon his breast, as his glance passed rapidly from ~~the~~ placid and proud countenance of the silent stripling, whose sense of ~~wrong was too power-~~ful to relieve itself by any outward emotion, to the exulting face of his inexorable wife, who with her tall figure rigidly erect, and her dark cheek flushed with passion, seemed to await the termination of the scene without one misgiving of its result.

No further opposition, as she at once felt, need be dreaded from Sir Jasper upon any point, when she had secured this victory over his young kinsman; and thenceforward the desolate man would be totally dependent upon herself for sympathy and companionship.

The same idea had, however, flashed dark and threatening, on the mind of the baronet. Should Hubert, indignant at his desertion, refuse all further communication with his family,

the ancient race would become extinct, and the name of Trevanion fall into oblivion. Sir Jasper felt that he must temporise ~~with~~ the youth, even at the risk of exciting the wrath of his wife ; and, acting upon this conviction, he turned resolutely towards him, and crushing down alike his haughtiness and the vague terror which had grown upon him, he said sternly ; “ You have heard my decision, Sir ? ”

“ I have.”

“ Henceforth, then, you will possess the control over your own career which you appear to covet. The world is before you, and you must struggle with it as you can. Do not, however, imagine that I have so utterly lost sight of my own dignity, as to permit you to go hence without the means of support necessary to uphold, in some degree, the honour of the name you bear—or, better still, if you will favour me by relinquishing that name until you have ceased to disgrace it—to enable you to give some show of respectability to the one which you may see fit to assume.”

"I have no intention to resign the name of my father, Sir Jasper Trevanion."

"Perhaps if I propose to you, in the event of this concession, to increase the provision I have offered, you may be induced to change your mind."

"By no means; for while conscious that I am not in a position to reject your offer, I beg you distinctly to understand that I accept it as the son of Aubrey Trevanion, and not as your nephew."

"Then, Sir, you shall be authorised to draw upon my banker for two hundred pounds annually, on condition that you inform him of your place of residence."

"I admit no conditions."

"Do not insist, Sir Jasper;" interposed Lady Trevanion; "if you are indeed prepared to commit so great a weakness as to reward this estimable young man for his disobedience, be it so; but pray do not descend to ask as a favour what you have every authority to enforce as a right."

"Then our conference is ended," murmured the baronet. "My steward shall communicate to you the address of my banker in town, Mr. Trevanion ; and you are at liberty to leave my house at any moment when you may find it convenient."

"I would beg to suggest an early one," said the lady, as with a lofty bow she swept from the apartment.

The uncle and the nephew were alone ; only a few paces separated them ; and for an instant they stood gazing earnestly at each other. The heavy breathing of the agitated baronet was audible amid the silence, and Hubert almost pitied him, as he witnessed the violence of the struggle which shook his frame. For the first time his heart yearned towards the weak and spirit-bowed man, whom he remembered so stern of purpose, and so haughty of demeanour ; but it was only for an instant ; for, ere long, resentment swallowed up compassion ; and contempt usurped the place of pity.

“Have you any further commands for me, Sir Jasper?” he asked as he prepared to leave the room.

“None, Sir, none. All is over between us.”

And with a cold and distant salutation the uncle and nephew parted for ever as both believed in this world,

CHAPTER IV.

HUSBAND AND FATHER.

ALL was indeed over ! And Hubert Trevanion, in his sixteenth year, stood alone in a world where the battle is too often to the strong, and the race to the swift. It is scarcely wonderful that after his uncle had left him, he should gaze around upon the once familiar features of his childhood's home with a strange sinking of the heart. The last hour had decided his destiny ; he had returned to the halls of his ancestors only for one brief day, and he was once more about to abandon them for ever. But he soon subdued the emotion which this consciousness had called up ;

for, from what was he, in fact, about to separate himself? From the mere inanimate objects which could be dear only from association, and which would remain unchanged whatever might be the vicissitudes of his own fortune. No tear would fall for him—no heart regret him—no wholesome human sympathy be awakened either by his struggles or his success; he was an alien from the home of his fathers, and he must go forth to seek another, and forget what might have been, in what was.

And thus he *did* go forth, after a warm leave-taking with the old servants, who wept when they wrung his hand, and could not control their sorrow as they saw that his own eyes were tearless.

“It is not because you do not feel, I know that;” sobbed the soft-hearted Mrs. Pearson; “I don’t like the wild strange light in your eyes; and I would sooner a thousand times see you cry like a child than seem so cold and placid. It isn’t natural, Master Hubert.”

“Nothing is natural under this roof, my

good old friend," replied the youth with a ghastly smile; "neither my uncle's supineness, nor his wife's tyranny, nor my own exile—nothing is natural, save, indeed, the kind hearts which are now throbbing about me. But I see that the chaise is ready, and I shall scarcely reach the post-town in time for the mail; so now, and perhaps for ever, Farewell! I need not ask you to remember me, for I feel sure that you will do so." And once more grasping the hands of the excited domestics, Hubert turned away; after having, with a mockery of courtesousness born of the bitterness of his spirit, deposited his leave-taking cards upon the hall-table; and springing into the hired vehicle which awaited him, he drove rapidly from the splendid mansion which was no longer to be his home.

In accordance with the resolution that he had expressed to his uncle, the young adventurer at once proceeded to Germany, where he ultimately succeeded in obtaining a situation in a substantial house of business, through the

good offices of the family of Herr Hauffman. Years passed on ; and the knowledge which he had acquired of the different European languages served him well with his employers, by whom he was gradually entrusted with the whole of their foreign correspondence ; and to whom his services ultimately became so indispensable that he was received into the firm, and became the head of their London establishment. Here, as may have been already gathered from the conversation with which our tale commences, he had contracted a marriage with the daughter and heiress of a wealthy merchant ; not without a certain repugnance consequent upon that pride of birth which he had never ceased to feel, but without hesitation, as the most rapid means of securing the independence which he had sworn to achieve.

Mrs. Trevanion was a weak, half-educated, *quasi*-fine lady, who had passed her life between the fashionable establishment where she had received her education, and her father's villa at Richmond. She had early lost her mother,

and was petted and indulged accordingly. Before she had attained her eighteenth year she had exhausted every circulating library within her reach ; could paint flowers, work crochet, and 'perform' on the piano. Small in stature, and slight in figure, there were nevertheless a grace and prettiness about her which easily induced a casual observer to forgive the expressionless character of her face, with its abundant screen of pale yellow hair, and its light and prominent blue eyes, in favour of an exquisite complexion, and a peculiarly pleasing smile. Hers was, in short, a style of beauty which resembled a clever but incomplete sketch, without sufficient colouring to give it character ; and which, place it in whatever light you would, never satisfied the eye, or thoroughly defined itself.

The *morale* of Miss Rotheringbury, was in perfect accordance with her *physique*. She had passionate impulses ; what spoiled child has not ? but she did not possess sufficient strength of purpose to carry out her will.

Timid by nature, she was easily overawed ; and while she indulged herself freely in tyrannising over those who readily yielded to her pleasure, she was cowed by a look from any individual who was bold enough to oppose her.

Such was the bride whom Hubert Trevanion, without much difficulty, wooed and won. His worldly position and commercial ability were satisfactory to the lady's father ; while the lady herself, fascinated by his handsome person, (which recalled at once her ideal of half-a-dozen of her favourite novel-heroes ;) and dazzled by the hope of a some-day reconciliation with the stately baronet and his jewel-laden wife, and a possible sojourn in the ancestral home of her high-born lover, with the self-mystification, common to young and unreflecting girls who mistake the captivation of their fancy for a nobler and better feeling, saw only a proper sense of dignity in the unbending coldness of her betrothed husband ; and had learnt, long ere he led her radiant in Brussels-lace and orange-blossom to the altar,

to defer to all his wishes, and to bend before his will, as entirely as if thenceforward she was to be a mere puppet in his hands.

And such in truth she proved, after one or two abortive struggles at supremacy which only tended to rivet her chains still closer, by affording to her impassive husband an additional opportunity of enforcing upon her conviction her utter incapacity of self-government. To every appeal he replied by reminding her of her past violence, expatiating upon its extreme ill-breeding, and pointing out to her the necessity, now that she had become the wife of a man of family and station, of some effort on her part to prove herself equal to the position she had attained. For a time the poor girl pouted and grew sullen as she listened to these inferences of her inferiority, and received perpetual warnings to abstain from certain habits and expressions, which, as Mr. Trevanion coolly informed her, were totally incompatible with high-breeding, and could not be tolerated in *his* wife; and at others she wept

over herself as she remembered that, until the hour in which she became such, no words of blame had ever reached her ear. She was so miserably alone too ; for with the exception of her father and the maiden sister who presided over his establishment, her fastidious lord would admit none of her former associates beneath his roof.

“ You are now in a responsible position, Mrs. Trevanion ; ” was his reply, as she endeavoured to expostulate against the exclusion of her two favourite cousins ; “ and must learn to suffice to yourself.”

The struggle was soon over. The total want of moral courage evinced by his wife, while it excited the contempt of Mr. Trevanion, admirably seconded his views ; and when the violent grief of his victim at the sudden death of her father occasioned the premature birth of her expected infant, and stretched her for months upon a bed of sickness, he at once felt that he had no further opposition to apprehend. Enchanted with the

lovely little girl, which thrived upon the bosom of a stranger while its childish mother was still a helpless invalid, Mrs. Trevanion neither sought nor wished for other companionship. She watched with pleased and puerile curiosity all the details of the nursery; and was never weary of wondering at the astounding fact that she was herself the mother of the rosy smiling little creature before her—that it was her own—that it already knew her, and loved her, *almost* as much as its nurse; and would stretch forth its little hands towards her, and crow with delight as it looked into her face.

It is true that there had been one drawback even to this innocent and natural felicity; and that one, as we need scarcely say, came from her husband, who, while occupied with the men of law in the settlement of Mr. Rotheringbury's affairs, had been summoned to the bedside of his suffering wife, whence with childish eagerness she directed his attention to her new treasure.

“Ha!” was the cold remark of the gentle-

man ; “so you have given me a daughter, Clara. I anticipated as much. And now, take care of yourself; and you may yet one day make me the father of a boy.”

He did, it is true, stoop down and kiss her pale cheek, but he turned no second glance upon the infant; and, in compliance with a hint from the nurse, he immediately afterwards left the sick room.

Ere the recovery of Mrs. Trevanion was complete her noble fortune had almost wholly passed into the hands of her husband; the villa at Richmond had become her own property; and the weak but well-meaning old aunt by whom she had been brought up had returned to Cumberland, anxious to end her days under the same roof which had witnessed her birth. Her other relations had, as we have already stated, long ceased to find a welcome in the home of Mr. Trevanion, and, in consequence, gradually forbore their visits; and thus, the young wife was thrown entirely upon her husband for society.

Under these circumstances, nothing could be more natural than that as her grief for the loss of her father insensibly wore away, her whole happiness centred in her child, whose extreme loveliness soon won for it a deep affection, even in the heart of its greatly disappointed father ; while, as years went by without any addition to his family, Mr. Trevanion at length brought himself to believe that the once-despised little girl might one day even better serve his ambition than the son for which he had so fondly hoped.

At the period of the infant's birth he had been sanguine in his belief that it would some day bear the title, and sustain the honours of his house, and his mortification at its sex was consequently deep and bitter ; but when, a year or two subsequently, he ascertained that Lady Trevanion had, contrary to all expectation, become the mother of a son, his dream vanished ; and he forthwith resolved to rear his daughter in such refinement as should, combined with her extraordinary beauty and

noble fortune, render her a fitting bride for the proudest noble in the land.

Thus, as the child emerged from infancy into girlhood, she was placed under the immediate charge of a decayed lady of rank, to whom the luxurious home of the wealthy and high-bred merchant offered a welcome refuge from the cares and privations to which she must otherwise have been exposed; and surrounded by the most eminent masters, whose services were requited with unbounded liberality, and rendered with equal zeal. No interference was permitted on the part of Mrs. Trevanion, who had long before this period become so passive under the authority of her husband, that she uttered no remonstrance; and, finally, satisfied by the affection of the loving girl, whose tenderness suffered no abatement even under these unpromising circumstances, she ceased to assert the slightest wish to control or guide her actions.

Lady Mary Brookland was the ruling spirit of the house; and while Mrs. Trevanion lounged

on her sofa engaged upon a novel, or took her solitary drive, the young heiress, accompanied by her high-born mistress, was introduced to the gaieties of London life; frequented the opera, the parks, and the public gardens; and, thanks to the able chaperonage of the accomplished woman of fashion, soon became a marked object of attraction in that sphere in which her father was anxious that she should move.

In due course of time the lovely Miss Trevanion was presented at court by her obliging friend Lady Mary, and welcomed to the intimacy of her aristocratic connexions. Her great beauty and splendid expectations were sedulously whispered abroad; her extraordinary accomplishments and refinement of manner were the theme of general admiration; and, before she had attained her twentieth year, more than one highly-descended suitor had become a candidate for her hand.

The exultation of Mr. Trevanion was great, although perfectly undemonstrative; he felt as if, through his daughter, he were resuming

his legitimate place in society ; and already looked forward to the coronet which was to cincture her brow as the reward of his own humiliation and struggle. As his thoughts occasionally glanced to Sir Jasper and his heir, his lip curled rather with pride than resentment. He should yet teach them that he could win an illustration for which he was indebted solely to himself, and which was independent of their influence.

Under such circumstances as these it does not require to be explained that Lady Mary Brookland gradually became all-powerful in the merchant's house. He had, as we have already shewn, from the very period of his marriage, discountenanced the associates, as well as the family of his wife ; and as his daughter grew to womanhood they were slowly and almost imperceptibly replaced by those of his aristocratic inmate, who was by no means averse to indulge her high-born but far from affluent nieces and cousins by a participation in the luxuries of her new home.

First, it was the Honourable Miss Stapleton, who, at the entreaty of her aunt, consented to pass a month with her interesting charge, and to accompany her to exhibitions, and picture galleries ; to appear in her opera-box, and to share in her riding excursions ; then it was the charming widow of Sir John Snowdon, whose son and heir being at Eton, rendered it peculiarly desirable that his fond and anxious mother should occasionally reside in town for a few weeks, in order to assure herself more satisfactorily of his health and progress than she could possibly do in her Highland castle ; and on the occasion of these gratifying visits, flocks of noble ladies availed themselves of the opportunity to welcome them to the metropolis, and to make the acquaintance of the charming Miss Trevanion, who formed so attractive a feature in the fashionable *fêtes* of the season.

The beautiful Richmond villa soon became immensely popular with the *beau monde*, who were enchanted with the *déjeûners dansants* and *matinées musicales* provided for their

amusement; and who, as they strolled over the velvet lawns and flower-studded conservatories, many of them proud of their own condescension, and others careless of all beyond the passing amusement of the hour—little suspected that they were mere pawns upon the diplomatic chess-board of their host, and were unconsciously working out the one great purpose of his existence.

The unexceptionable breeding of Mr. Trevanion, his ancient descent, and the uncalculating munificence of his establishment, ensured the respect and deference of all by whom he was approached; while his sterling good sense and general information were alike appreciated by the more reflecting portion of his guests. Dowager dames and middle-aged nobles soon learnt to prefer his society to that of the pleasure-hunters who fluttered through his saloons; and his dinner-table in Westbourne Terrace was in due course of time as much and as satisfactorily filled as his Richmond shrubberies.

Early accustomed to submission and supineness, Mrs. Trevanion evinced no mortification at the fact that Lady Mary did the honours of her house, seemingly satisfied that by such an arrangement she was relieved alike from exertion and responsibility ; and, as she was always courteous to her guests, amiable, and well-dressed, she was generally considered as a lady-like, quiet little person, somewhat uninteresting, but perfectly presentable, whose destiny was a most enviable one, and for whom the world must evidently be *couleur de rose*.

Nor was the existence of Mrs. Trevanion, in point of fact, by any means an unhappy one : she was proud of her husband even while she feared him ; and still more proud of her daughter, whose unfailing affection had been proof against all the temptations to arrogance and heartlessness by which she was surrounded ; while she was at the same time dazzled and delighted by the perpetual stream of gaiety and splendour upon which she was borne unresistingly along. She was amused by the eager

pursuit of pleasure in which she was too indolent to share, even had she been permitted to do so ; and flattered when her comfortable sofa was shared by a titled dowager or a withered man of fashion.

For years the courtly Lady Mary, who had become strongly attached to her young charge, had earnestly encouraged the ambitious dreams of her host, and watched the patrician admirers by whom the fair girl was approached with a jealousy equal to his own ; but, a few months previous to the opening of our tale, she had relaxed wonderfully in her vigilance. Whether it were that she considered Miss Trevanion at six-and-twenty, 'and, in other respects, her own mistress, equally competent to judge and act for herself in the most important circumstance of her life, or that some other undivulged reason existed for her sudden quiescence, it is at least certain that her lectures upon the subject of eligible marriages, and the expediency of forming desirable connexions, altogether ceased ; while it was equally appa-

rent, that the beautiful heiress, although courteous and affable to all her suitors, evinced no preference towards either. And as the popularity of his daughter increased, so did the worldly dreams of Mr. Trevanion grow more and more brilliant. It was a matter perfectly settled in his mind that she was destined to accomplish a splendid alliance—a conviction which was strengthened by the peculiar disposition and habits of the young lady herself, who, reared in indulgence and luxury, was at once self-relying and refined, and entirely unsuited for an existence of obscurity or struggle.

How many visionary coronets danced before the mental sight of the proud father, poised only by a silken thread above the polished brow of his child, which it required but her touch to snap. With what silent delight did he anticipate the moment when as a peeress she might look down in disdain upon the haughty relatives by whom she had hitherto been overlooked and neglected. The otherwise high-minded and right-judging man,

whose sense of honour was acute upon all other subjects, was alike blind and weak on this. He did not give a thought to the happiness of the bright being who made the sunshine of his home; but, his better feelings warped by ambition and resentment, he looked only to her worldly greatness, and to his own revenge. Every luxury of attire which could enhance her beauty was lavishly bestowed upon her; and even he himself, unbending as he was to all around him, treated her with a deference which to his jaundiced mind was already a triumph.

CHAPTER V.

A FÊTE CHAMPÊTRE.

THERE was a brilliant fête at the far-famed villa of Mrs. St. Maur Fulke at Putney; and as Mrs. St. Maur Fulke was the fashion, "all the world" had been intriguing for the last month to procure tickets. Various were the rumours which had been circulated on the subject of the approaching festivity; and the invited were meanwhile busied in preparing their fancy dresses for the occasion, and congratulating themselves upon the charming idea of their hostess, who had positively refused to sanction the admittance of such guests as should present themselves otherwise than *en*

costume. The extensive grounds of the villa swept down to the river, where gaily-caparisoned boats with silken awnings lay moored beneath the over-hanging willows; gypsy-tents, dancing-booths, and marquees fitted with counters, and crowded with glittering trifles, which were to be distributed by lottery, dotted the lawns and shrubberies; hidden orchestras made the summer air vocal; and on every side groups of fair women and gallant cavaliers in many-coloured raiment, rendered the whole scene one parterre of moving flowers.

We are not about to describe these more minutely; a fancy-fête of this description may be readily imagined; Peeresses were content to play peasant girls for the hour, while private gentlemen strutted as kings among the brilliant crowd.

And a crowd in truth it was: for, although Mrs. St. Maur Fulke had resolutely turned a deaf ear to many an earnest entreaty, declaring that she merely sought to assemble

her more immediate friends, she was so popular an individual, and so singularly favoured in that respect that upwards of seven hundred intimates graced her entertainment. The lively and wealthy little widow herself made a charming *grisette*. Nothing could be more perfect than the arrangement of her magnificent hair, nothing more becoming than the tightly-fitting bodice, and nothing more captivating than the fairy-like foot and ankle which were revealed by the short *jupon*. No wonder that many of the women and all the men were enraptured with Mrs. St. Maur Fulke!

Nevertheless, however, there was one more brilliant and stately beauty who fairly divided with her hostess the admiration of the courtly revellers, and that one was Miss Trevanion, whose dark loveliness was rendered striking by her gypsy garb. Many was the palm extended to invite her predictions and many the low-breathed and anxious question to which she replied with a dignified composure

well calculated to extinguish the hope that her bright eyes had inspired. For a time her attentive chaperone, Lady Mary, moved majestically beside her, habited as a sybil; but gradually, as the human kaleidoscope varied its figures, the two ladies became separated by the crowd; other gypsies with dark eyes and hair bewildered the titled duenna in the distance; and finally she relinquished all idea of pursuing her lost charge.

It was a glorious summer day; one of those rare days all balm and sunshine, which make the very sense of existence doubly enjoyable; the flexile branches of the trees danced in the light and perfumed air; the flowers lifted their glowing blossoms to the sky; the ripples of the river were brilliant as diamond dust; and every sun-touched leaf glittered like a living emerald; while the long dark avenues of flowering shrubs, over-arched by forest timber, offered their welcome shade to those who sought escape for a season from the heat and hurry of the open lawns.

Through one of these bowery arcades, a few hours after the commencement of the fête, slowly wandered two figures engaged in a low and evidently engrossing conversation; who, ever as they approached the termination of the *allée*, retraced their steps, as if anxious to secure themselves against intrusion. One of these was Miss Trevanion; but all the dignified playfulness which had won for her the admiration of the groups by which she had been previously surrounded, had totally disappeared. Although her movements were steady and measured, her head was bowed, and the hand which grasped her cloak was so tightly clenched that her small fingers were rigid and bloodless. Her companion, who was dressed as a minstrel, and carried a guitar slung across his shoulder, was evidently several years her junior in age; his fair hair clustered massively about his cheeks and brow, and his large eyes, of a deep and intense blue, were fringed by long dark lashes upon both the upper and the under lids; in person he was tall and slight, symmetrically

and vigorously formed ; and there was a distinction in his finely chiselled features and lofty carriage peculiarly attractive.

“ It is worse than vain to indulge in such a hope, Sydney ; ” said the lady despondingly, as they turned once more into the deepest shade of the shrubbery ; “ even Lady Mary herself would not dare to broach the subject to my father, great as her influence undoubtedly is ; and now, as if to render our difficulty still more insurmountable, I am persecuted by the insane pursuit of that superannuated old peer.”

“ But surely, Ida——”

“ Nay, nay——” interposed Miss Trevanion, striving to smile ; “ you need waste no words on him. I have no inclination to purchase a coronet, and as little desire to wear one.”

“ And cannot you convince your father of that fact ? You, who are all powerful with him.”

“ Perhaps I might, but our position would still remain unaltered. For that purpose, as I have already explained to you, I have been

reared and educated. My own inclinations have never been consulted ; nor will I hesitate to confess, that until I knew you, I never cared to speculate upon the future ; and my father has consequently lived on in the firm conviction that his wishes would not be thwarted. From this fatal mistake I can anticipate nothing but unhappiness ; for, whatever may be my final decision as regards yourself, I can foresee only displeasure and disappointment on his part."

"And can there be any doubt as to that decision ?" asked the young man earnestly.

"I fear not;" was the subdued reply ; "but still I shrink from the contest like a coward. It is not your want of fortune which will operate against you, for as an only child I have more than enough ; but it is——"

"My obscurity;" said her companion bitterly.

"Sydney !" exclaimed Miss Trevanion with haughty indignation ; "You are a gentleman, both by birth and breeding, or *I* never could

have loved you; but you have no title to offer to me—and, then—,” she paused, and blushed deeply.

“Say on, Ida. What more? I will endeavour to bear all which it may be your pleasure to inflict.”

“Your youth,”—murmured the lady.

“Now you are in truth fighting against shadows!” was the impatient retort; “a marvellous disparity of six years if I mistake not. Can Mr. Trevanion possibly infer from that circumstance that I am unable to protect you?”

“I was not thinking of my father when I urged the objection;” said his companion; “No, Sydney; it was born of my own fears. You have assured me, and I believe you, that I am the first woman whom you have ever loved; but where can I find the assurance that I shall be the last?”

“In yourself. Who that has won the affection of Ida Trevanion can ever turn a thought of love upon another of her sex? You do yourself injustice by such an apprehension.”

“At this moment you feel all that you declare : of that, I have no doubt;” was the low reply ; “nor will I be guilty of the pitiful affectation of seeming to think otherwise ; but time, Sydney, time is a sad magician ; and the day may come when even you may feel the imprudence of having bound yourself to a wife even those six years your senior.”

“Never !” exclaimed the young man energetically.

“And mark me Sydney;” pursued Miss Trevanion, laying her hand heavily on his arm, and raising her eyes steadily to his ; “mark me—for this moment may be the turning-point of both our lives—I could bear all but that. Were such a contingency possible, I could share poverty, hardship, and even exile with you ; but one symptom of change, one suspicion of coldness, one dream—mark me, I say once more—one *dream* that you had bestowed upon another the love which you had vowed to me, would kill me. Reflect, therefore, before it is too late. I fear that

you have not yet learned to understand my character; to see that under an habitual quietude of manner I conceal a strength of purpose and a depth of feeling which must make me either supremely happy or supremely miserable. I must be all or nothing to the man into whose hands I resign my destiny."

"Ida;" said her companion; "I have not deserved this doubt. Did I not feel that from the moment in which you become my wife my whole being will be centred in yourself for ever, I would not expose you to the trial which awaits you."

"Again I say, reflect;" continued Miss Trevanion solemnly; "it is my perfect consciousness of my own nature which causes me to hesitate. Little did I dream when we first met, that in you I saw the arbiter of my destiny; nor can I yet understand that the ordinarily keen-sighted Lady Mary should, up to this hour, have failed to remark the progress of our intimacy."

"My aunt is by no means so blind as you

suppose;" said the young man with a quiet smile; "nor would it appear that she considers Sydney Elphinstone so ineligible a match, even for Miss Trevanion, as that young lady herself. Her own sister married a commoner, and was a far happier woman than Lady Mary."

"Do you really mean to infer that she is aware of our attachment?"

"Has she not lost you in the crowd, Ida? Does she not occasionally doze at the opera? Can you have failed to remark the long prosy conversations in which she indulges from time to time, with persons whose intellect she despises, and with whose modes of thinking she has no sympathy?"

Miss Trevanion became suddenly thoughtful, but only for an instant. "No, no; it is not possible;" she said firmly; "my father trusts her so implicitly; and it would be too cruel were he to be deceived in us both."

"My assurance that she is our friend gives you no pleasure then, Ida?" said her lover reproachfully.

“Do not mistake me. I only fear that Lady Mary, in her affection for her nephew and her friend, is unconsciously incurring a frightful responsibility, and may hereafter have cause to regret her indulgence.”

“Listen to me;” broke in the young man impetuously. “My position is a painful one. Loving you—and you cannot doubt how well! and how entirely for yourself—I may, and must, to the world appear sordid and interested. This consideration was bitter enough, but it has hitherto been my pride to feel that you at least acquitted me of so base a motive. Would that you were a beggar, Ida; for then, at least ——”

“Shame on you!” exclaimed Miss Trevanion; “Do not suffer your mind to be sullied for an instant by such a thought. Money!”—and her proud lip curled with all the scorn of one who had never been taught to feel the value of the riches for which she evinced so unequivocal a contempt; “surely you have already betrayed annoyance enough

upon that odious subject, and it is quite superfluous to renew it."

"Forgive me; and you *will* do so, when I explain that, conscious of my own suffering upon that point, I was anxious to exonerate my aunt from a similar suspicion. She loves me; I have acknowledged to her that my every hope of happiness depends upon an union with yourself; and thus, if indeed she has betrayed her trust, I can but bless her for the weakness."

"But did she not endeavour to impress upon you the imprudence of such an attachment?"

"I suppose I must acknowledge that she did. She told me, I remember, that Mr. Trevanion was ambitious, and that she could hold out no hope; that my suit would be considered by him, and probably by yourself also, as presumptuous and absurd."

"Absurd?"

"Even so."

"And wherefore?"

"Because it was so evidently hopeless."

"Did not the word imply another meaning?"

"None that I could discover."

"And yet it might be that she meant to show you the absurdity of asking the hand of a woman older than yourself."

"*Again, Ida!*"

"I cannot help it. The conviction haunts me pertinaciously, that, in overlooking so serious a fact, I am wilfully risking our mutual happiness. Women are so frail, Sydney; they fade so soon; they are at the mercy of a thousand casualties, from which men are free. They are, moreover, so susceptible of wrong, that, although they may appear to forget as well as to forgive, it is strange but true that every new sorrow recalls the memory of past suffering. Grievances and trials which had seemed for a time, even to themselves, to have been outlived and obliterated, add their mental pang to the new wound; and scars, which had apparently closed, bleed again; for the heart is more difficult to

heal than the body, and more tenacious of the hurts by which it has been injured. If, then, such be the fate of the most forbearing of the sex, judge what must be the destiny of those whose nature forbids them either to forget or to forgive—for whom the first insult is final—who can hate as fiercely as they can love. Should they not be wary? Should they not shrink from rushing upon their own destruction?”

“Ida, you torture both yourself and me.”

“And it is because I love you, Sydney, that I do so. Because my love is so selfish and so engrossing, that I seek to forge arms against myself. Because I would not that hereafter you should look back with pity or with scorn upon my weakness.”

“And do you in reality believe that I could ever prove so vile an ingrate?”

“I think less of you individually, Sydney, while thus listening to the voice of reason and common sense, than of human nature in the mass. Who can answer for the effect which

may beproduced upon his nature by time and circumstance?"

"It is in the power of every man of honour to do so."

"But I would owe nothing to the honour of my husband upon a point like this. Such a safeguard to my pride would but revolt my affection."

"You distort my meaning, Ida. Is this generous?"

"I know not!" said Miss Trevanion sadly; "I only feel that in becoming your wife, I should so utterly resign my every chance of happiness into your hands, that, were I to deceive myself, the wreck would be a fatal one."

"You do not, then, consider me worthy of the trust?"

"As you are, Sydney? Oh, yes! Worthy—most worthy. I only tremble when I reflect upon what you may one day become."

"This discussion is idle and most painful, Ida;" said Elphinstone in an unsteady voice; "I have but assurances to offer, to which

you apparently assign no credit. I was not prepared for such mistrust on your part."

"Do not wrong me;" was the eager rejoinder; "I do *not* mistrust you—this interview is a sufficient evidence to the contrary; but ——"

"But you dare not confide your happiness to my keeping?"

There was silence for a moment, and nothing could be heard in that quiet and secluded avenue, save the sounds of far-off music, the ringing of distant laughter, and the whisperings of the wind through the dense foliage of the overarching trees; and then came a low murmur of "I do—I will;" and the extended hand of Miss Trevanion was passionately clasped in that of her companion.

"Ida—my own."

"Now, and for ever."

"Without doubt or misgiving?"

"In all faith and trust."

"I will merit both."

"I believe it, Sydney; and on my side I

will endeavour to prove to you that I deserve your full and entire affection ; and I. will strive to forget ——”

“ Forget nothing, save that you have been unjust to yourself ; and if a life-long devotion can repay you for the blessedness which you have conferred on me, it is, and must be must be yours. Do not imagine for an instant that I am unconscious of the sacrifice which you are willing to make in order to secure my happiness ; do not suppose that I am blind to the worldly advantages which you so generously resign for my sake ; I am but too keenly alive to their extent. I know that you will be blamed, and even pitied, for bestowing yourself upon a poor and nameless suitor, in the fullness of your beauty, and the zenith of your fashion, when the noblest and the proudest are contending for your favour ; but you shall have no cause to regret such a concession.”

“ I accept the assurance ;” said Miss Trevanion tenderly ; “ I will henceforward throw

all misgiving to the winds, and trust implicitly in your affection. We have, however, still to struggle against very formidable difficulties, Sydney ; and I confess, that when I think of my father's anger I feel terrified."

"Surely, with such an auxiliary as my aunt, you will be able to overcome the objections of Mr. Trevanion."

"I repeat that I believe them to be insuperable ; but, as it has now become my duty to make the attempt, I will not shrink from the task, onerous as it is."

"Would that I could spare you the trial!"

"Impossible ! I must meet the displeasure which I shall have incurred, alone ; and this, Sydney, will be a sufficient proof of the sincerity of my affection ; for, peculiar as he may be on this one point, my father has hitherto been to me all kindness and indulgence ; and I cannot involve him in mortification and disappointment without suffering severely on my side. My only consolation will exist in the conviction that he desires my happiness, and

that I shall have secured it by uniting myself to the only man who has ever won my love. And now, let us part, or our absence will be remarked."

"So soon, Ida?"

"Believe me, it is better so."

But still they lingered awhile, her hand in his, and conversing in those low tones which are audible rather to the heart than to the ear, but which are nevertheless trumpet-tongued to those who love. And then their hands were more firmly clasped together; their eyes met in a long and eloquent look; the lady emerged into the sunshine, and the gentleman plunged yet deeper into the shadows of the shrubbery. The cheek of Miss Trevanion was pale, but she betrayed no other symptom of emotion; and if she played her adopted part less gaily than before she indulged in that sylvan *tête-à-tête*, there was a graceful languor in her whole deportment which rendered her only the more fascinating and attractive to her assiduous admirers.

Nothing could go off better than the fête of Mrs. St. Maur Fulke ; and numerous were the compliments which she received from her reluctantly-departing guests, warned by a rising moon, and a rising mist from the river, that even the most refined pleasures must at last terminate. Nymphs and goddesses folded ~~their~~ shawls and mantles about them ; knights and courtiers resolved themselves into mere mortals ; carriages thundered to the gates ; the voices of servants and policemen were loud in every direction ; and Miss Trevanion, handed to her chariot by a minstrel whose plumed hat completely overshadowed his countenance, was soon rolling along the road to London, seated beside the silent and somewhat conscience-stricken Sybil, to whose care she had been confided.

CHAPTER VI.

A REVELATION.

"AND so," said Mr. Trevanion on the following morning, as he rose from the breakfast table, and transferred the Morning Post to his wife; "the *fête* of Mrs. St. Maur Fulke was the most brilliant affair of the season. Do you concur in this opinion, Lady Mary?"

"There can be no doubt that it was admirably arranged; and very successful;" was the quiet reply, "In fact I never saw a collection of more effective costumes, or listened to more agreeable music. What say you, Ida?"

"That if the guests were not amused, it

was assuredly not the fault of the hostess" said the young lady.

"You, at least, have every reason to be satisfied;" observed her father; "as I find it recorded in the Post, that 'the lovely and accomplished Miss Trevanion was one of its brightest ornaments;' although I still maintain that the costume which you selected was by no means that in which I should, had I been consulted on the subject, have counselled *my* daughter to appear."

"I think that you would have altered your opinion, had you seen how admirably Ida enacted her assumed character;" said the indulgent and politic Lady Mary; "I can assure you that it excited general remark."

Mr. Trevanion acknowledged the courtesy by a gracious bow.

"And it was, moreover, excessively becoming;" pursued the family friend; "I never saw the dear girl appear to more advantage. I was quite proud of my charge."

"I hope, Madam, that you will never have

cause to be otherwise ;” observed Mr. Trevanion haughtily ; “ but that ere long——”

“ No doubt, no doubt, my dear Sir ;” interposed the lady somewhat nervously ; “ there cannot be a question that the social success of your daughter will augment, while that of so many less highly-gifted girls is terribly apt to diminish. Ida’s fashion is ~~now so perfectly~~ established, and the set into which I have had the privilege of introducing her is so thoroughly unexceptionable, that her future station depends entirely upon herself.”

“ I am convinced ;” said Mr. Trevanion with a second lofty bow of acknowledgment ; “ that she will not lose sight, either of her obligation to you, or of the immense responsibility which now rests upon herself.”

“ I am sure ;” whined the thin voice of Mrs. Trevanion, from behind the broad pages of the newspaper by which she was entirely concealed ; “ that if Ida is not happy and satisfied, I cannot tell what could make her so.”

“ My young friend has certainly drawn a

prize in the great lottery of life ;” said the bland Lady Mary in her smoothest accent.

“A fact of which I trust that she is fully aware ;” was the sententious rejoinder of the gentleman, as he strode loftily across the floor ; “for, truth to say, I can scarcely imagine a want or a wish on her part which she is unable to gratify—young, handsome, and fashionable, with the prospect of a fine fortune, and the offer of a peerage——”

“Can I speak a few words with you in private, Papa ?” asked Miss Trevanion in a firm voice, but with a heightened colour.

“In private, Ida ! Are we not now sufficiently private for any communication which you may find it necessary to make ? Is not Lady Mary one of the family ? While your mother——”

“Excuse me, Mr. Trevanion ;” said the noble widow with alacrity, at the same time rising from her seat ; “I have letters of some importance to write, and shall be glad to commence them as early in the day as possible ;

you must therefore allow me to retire to my own room."

"As you will, Madam; as you will," replied the host, holding back the door with the ceremonious courtesy which he always observed to the other sex; "if such be the case I can of course offer no objection; but were it otherwise——"

"Not a word more, my dear Sir,; believe me that no apology is necessary: I was about to withdraw as Ida spoke;" and gathering the rich folds of her grey damask dress about her, the portly lady disappeared.

"And you, Mrs. Trevanion?" said her husband interrogatively.

"I would rather that Mamma should remain;" was the calm remark of his daughter.

"Her opinion upon the subject to be discussed, of whatever nature it may be, cannot but prove valuable;" observed Mr. Trevanion contemptuously.

"That is precisely my own sentiment;" said the young lady, "for I have firm faith in her

affection for her only child ; and as I am about to speak frankly and seriously upon a matter involving my future happiness in life, it will be a sincere gratification to me should she see and feel as I do."

"You have then some doubt as to *my* sympathy—" said her father tartly.

"I confess it ; but I do not despair of convincing alike your heart and your reason ; for I have also an unshaken trust in your paternal tenderness."

"Enough of this verbal skirmishing, Ida. What have you to say ? I have business in town to-day, and expect the carriage round every instant."

"I shall not detain you long, Sir. You have for the last four years expressed a great desire to see me settled in life, and I consider it my duty to tell you without procrastination or concealment that my election is made."

"You accept Lord Downmere ?"

Miss Trevanion smiled disdainfully. "Decidedly not. I have no ambition to become

the wife of a man old enough to be my grandfather."

"A peer of the realm—"

"A selfish sensualist."

"Pshaw! The only chance of married happiness for a woman is to unite herself to a man of twice her own age, who knows how to appreciate her youth and beauty at their proper value. A sensualist! And why not? How can that affect your comfort? An egotist! Trash! Let him indulge himself as he may, *you* are not likely to suffer from his selfishness. Upon this subject I shall admit of no argument, as I have already promised your hand to Lord Downmere."

"Sir!" exclaimed the young lady indignantly: "I cannot surely have understood you rightly; did you say that you had promised my hand?"

"I did."

"And without my sanction?"

"Even so."

"Then you must excuse me, if I at once

declare that I am as little disposed to defer to the tyranny of a father as to that of a husband. We are not, happily, in Circassia, where parents make a trade of their children, and dispose of them to the best bidder; and thus I do not acknowledge the right even of my own parent to transfer me like a bale of merchandise."

"You might at least have spared me that taunt, Miss Trevanion!" exclaimed the merchant with vehemence: "It comes badly from you, who are indebted to my self-sacrifice for all the advantages upon which you pride yourself."

"Pardon me, Sir; I intended no sarcasm;" said his daughter deprecatingly: "nor can I comprehend how you should for an instant attach such a meaning to my words. My very rejection of the suitor whom you have proposed to me is a sufficient guarantee of my utter indifference to the empty distinctions of rank and name. No one can have a more profound respect for high blood and ancient

lineage than myself, but I have no inclination to immolate my happiness at the shrine of mere rank."

"I shall not bandy phrases with you, Miss Trevanion;" was the curt reply; "my straightforward mode of speech is no match for your sentimental eloquence; and it would appear that my paternal authority is no curb to your will. Be good enough, therefore, to inform me of your pleasure, in order that I may not waste time which can be more profitably employed."

Tears rose to the eyes of the young lady, but they did not fall. She remained silent for an instant; and then, grasping the hand of her father as it rested upon the back of the chair from which he had risen, she said beseechingly, "Do not be harsh with me! If you only knew how much it costs me to thwart your wishes upon so important a point as this, I am sure that you would rather pity than condemn me; but believe me when I assure you that it is its very importance which gives me

strength to do so. You have been so invariably kind and indulgent; you have so long made my happiness your chief care, that I dare not bring myself to suspect your affection when I am about to put it to the test."

"What more?" was the cold inquiry, as Mr. Trevanion withdrew his hand from her clasp.

"I have already declared;" said his daughter retreating a step or two, as if stung by his tone and gesture; "that my election is made—my promise is given—my hand is pledged. That promise and that hand were mine to bestow or to withhold; and I have acted upon the firm conviction that I possessed an undoubted right to decide my own destiny."

"And this conviction has induced you to counteract my wishes, and to disappoint my views. What compensation have you to offer? What brilliant establishment have you secured for yourself which may tend to reconcile me to your disobedience?"

"Will not my future happiness ——"

"No romance, if you please, Miss Trevanion.

Mine has been a life made up altogether of realities, and I have little taste for supplying incidents for a novel in my own family. Happiness in this world, young lady, as you ought by this time to be aware, implies wealth, station, and influence; and once more I ask you if you have secured these?"

"And on my part, Sir, I frankly answer—No."

"Better and better!" was the sarcastic reply of the merchant, as his cheek became livid with suppressed passion; "but pray proceed."

"I will; my hand is pledged, and pledged irrevocably, to Mr. Sydney Elphinstone."

"To *Mr.* Sydney Elphinstone—Indeed!" sneered Mr. Trevanion; while a "Good gracious me!" came from the lounging-chair in which his wife had hitherto sat silent and disregarded.

"A beardless boy, and a pennyless pauper;" pursued the gentleman after drawing a long breath; "You do honour to your birth and

breeding even by such an inclination, Miss Trevanion. Rest assured, however, that no folly of the kind shall ever be perpetrated in my family ; I positively forbid all further mention of the young man's name beneath my roof."

"I much regret, Sir ——"

"And so do I, Madam ; so do I ; deeply, bitterly regret the degeneracy of a child from whose sense of personal dignity and filial affection I had looked for obedience, and a ready co-operation in my own views. Do you imagine, Miss Trevanion, that I have bestowed a fortune upon your education, and petted and pampered you like a peeress, in order that you may make me the laughing-stock of my haughty relatives ?"

"I had flattered myself, Sir, that I was indebted for all the advantages and indulgences which I have enjoyed, to your fatherly affection alone."

"Listen to me ;" said Mr. Trevanion sternly ; "Let my motives be what they might, you owe me tenfold the gratitude which a parent

could claim from an ordinary child. Your very birth, Madam, was a bitter disappointment. I had married your mother in the hope that she would make me the father of a son; that I might meet Sir Jasper upon equal terms; and that the heir to my wealth might illustrate the family name as proudly as he who was its representative. You know me, and the one ambition of my life, well enough to feel that I became a husband from no selfish seeking after personal gratification; I could and should have sufficed to myself, had I not had an ulterior aim—but enough on that subject. *You* were born; a girl—a woman—and my first hope was frustrated. Your mother bore me no other child, and new prospects opened before me. You were handsome, and I was careful that your beauty should be enhanced by every extraneous aid. I have reared you rather like the daughter of a duke than the heiress of a commoner. I have spared neither gold nor care; and, I believe I may be permitted to hope that neither has been expended injudiciously. I have done

more. I have secured to you the services of a woman of rank—do you mark me, Miss Trevanion? I say—and I say it advisedly,—the *services* of a woman of rank; for, whatever you may feel inclined to think upon the subject, you may trust me when I assure you that there is no leveller like wealth; and however respectfully we may see fit to treat Lady Mary Brookland, it is not the less certain that her poverty has compelled her to bow her pride; and that she is as completely my hired dependent as the butler who officiates at my sideboard. And now, allow me to inquire what return you are anxious to make for all my solicitude? I believed, and I had every right to believe, that the false position in which I had so long lived, must necessarily end when you attained to womanhood, and were competent to secure such a marriage as *my* birth, and your own personal and acquired advantages, rendered expedient. I secured for you the homage of a nobleman, and I was satisfied. I felt that my task was ended, and my object

accomplished. I had toiled and waited for years, but I had ultimately effected my purpose ; and I turned back no regret upon the past."

"Yet surely, Sir, my future happiness may be considered as worthy of some consideration."

"I have already requested that you would have the courtesy to spare me all phrase-making;" was the impatient retort: "we are wasting words. Will you, or will you not, Miss Trevanion—I must now insist on your definitive reply—accept the hand of Lord Downmere?"

"I cannot;" said the young lady with a quivering lip, but with unabated firmness; "I do not even respect him; and I will never give myself to a man whom I despise."

"This is, if I rightly understand, your final determination. Good. Listen, in your turn, to mine. Become the wife of your pauper-lover, and share his poverty; marry your boy-suitor, and expose yourself to the ridicule

of the world ; but do not expect me to take any part either in the privations or the sarcasms to which you are willing to expose yourself. Do not, moreover, expect that I shall render myself responsible for your obstinacy, or your error,—for I am willing to give it whichever name you please. Whatever may be my disappointment or my mortification, I have still moral courage enough left to assert myself ; and no hardly-earned gains of mine shall go to enrich a son-in-law whom I will never recognise.”

“ My *dear* father—”

“ You have heard my decision, Miss Trevanion. It now remains for you to make yours.”

“ It is made, Sir. My word is pledged ; and I should not be your daughter if I failed to redeem it.”

“ The flattery is delicate, but useless and ill-timed. We then thoroughly understand each other ?”

“ I fear so.”

It is a fatal error to compel, by unreasoning severity, a feeling which was perhaps not yet sufficiently strong to withstand tenderness and entreaty, into direct and deliberate opposition, and to assail it too roughly by giving to it the stimulus of anger ; while it is a common mistake, and a fatal one, to suppose that by harshness and intemperance we can succeed in crushing it, as though it were a mere brute antagonist to be overcome by physical force. There is a recoil against oppression in every heart ; and many may be persuaded and convinced by gentleness, who become only the more resolute when opposed by violence.

Whether such would have been the case in the present instance it is impossible to decide, as the trial was not made ; while the look of calm defiance which passed between the mortified father and his indignant child at this period of the conversation gave ample evidence that neither was disposed to yield.

“ Now, don't be obstinate, Ida ; ” whined out the thin voice from the arm-chair ; “ your

father does not like you to marry Mr. Elphinstone—I do not like it—and I am quite sure that Lady Mary will be furious.”

“Your opinion is, no doubt, a valuable one, Mrs. Trevanion;” said her husband sarcastically; “but, nevertheless, I take the liberty of dissenting from it; as I am quite prepared to believe that we are indebted to that very lady for the pleasant position in which we now find ourselves.”

“I can assure you—” commenced his daughter, as a flush of generous indignation burnt upon her cheek and brow; “that you wrong Lady Mary Brookland, Sir, by such a supposition. It is true that she originally presented Mr. Elphinstone to me; and surely nothing could be more simple than that she should introduce so near a relative to the members of a family in which she resided; but, beyond the fact of this introduction, Lady Mary has never made the slightest effort to force Mr. Elphinstone upon my acquaintance.”

“Probably not;” was the cold reply; “Lady

Mary is a woman of taste and tact, and not likely to commit herself by any overt exertions to that effect: but there are such things, Miss Trevanion, as negative helps—assistance rendered rather by omissions than by active services.”

“Is not this ungenerous, Sir?”

“It may be so; but I apprehend that it is not unjust. I cannot be deceived in believing that the admirable ‘understanding’—Is not that the conventional term applied to such dignified and womanly arrangements as that to which it would appear that you have lent yourself?—must have taken place at the *fête* of Mrs. St. Maur Fulke. Now, will you permit me to enquire how your chaperone had disposed of herself when this very romantic scene was taking place? Was she present?”

“She was not. We had been accidentally separated by the crowd.”

“No doubt. I suspected as much; and the great extent of the pleasure grounds naturally rendered it quite impossible that you should

meet again until the gentleman had carried his point. It is precisely as I thought; and confirms me more stedfastly than ever in the conviction, that in every affair of life there is nothing so desirable as to secure the co-operation of persons of sense, who appreciate so admirably the extent of what is required of them; while simpletons, on the contrary, are like grey hairs—they are always obtrusive, and never can be kept in their right places. I was quite sure that poor Lady Mary had, in some way, lost sight of you altogether.”

“Pardon me, Sir, if, in my turn, I remark that we are losing sight of our subject;” said Miss Trevanion with dignity; “I have already exonerated Lady Mary from all blame, and am quite willing to take upon myself the responsibility of my own actions. I am no child to obey the leading-strings of a nurse—no puppet to dance obedience to the wires of an exhibitor—but a reflecting and anxious woman, conscious that I hold in my own hands the control of my future destiny.”

"So be it;" contemptuously retorted her father: "and I congratulate you that they are so full, as you are likely to have little else to grasp in them."

"The jest is a bitter one, but I will not resent it;" said the young lady. "I see and feel, painfully feel, that on the one most important action of my life there exists no hope of our sympathizing. But still, oh, my dear father, still have mercy on me; and do not refuse to me at least your blessing and your forgiveness. Reflect that, in taking so decided a step in opposition to your wishes I am already sufficiently to pity; and do not let me have in addition to apprehend the misery of your permanent displeasure."

For an instant the lip of Mr. Trevanion quivered, but only for an instant. The proud spirit of the disappointed man was stronger even than his paternal love, and he rallied ere his daughter had time to remark the passing emotion. "My blessing!" he exclaimed vehemently; "My blessing! On what? On your

deliberate disobedience? My forgiveness? Of what? Of your premeditated overthrow of all my hopes? Look for neither, Madam; look for neither. Avail yourself of your boasted privilege of free-will—give yourself to a beggar—the law will be your sanction, and I your victim. Let that consciousness suffice you. All further words are needless. I withdraw all opposition—I will offer no impediments to your folly; go, and like other lunatics, rush upon your fate.”

“Father!”—

“Enough, Miss Trevanion;” was the stern rejoinder; “I still feel sufficient pity for your madness to accord you four-and-twenty hours to reflect; but, if at the termination of that time, you adhere to your present insane purpose, you will no longer have a father, and will be at perfect liberty to replace his protection by that of any husband you may see fit to select.”

As these words were uttered, Mr. Trevanion hastily left the room, while his daughter sank

back upon the sofa, and buried her face in her hands.

For a moment only there was silence, as the weak and timid wife had no sooner ascertained the disappearance of her husband than she roused herself from her habitual apathy, and querulously upbraided her agitated daughter, with what she characteristically designated as her silly and nonsensical obstinacy. The reproaches of Mrs. Trevanion, however, fell upon the ear of Ida with no greater force than the whistling of the subsiding wind amid the cordage of a tempest-tossed vessel, when the deep booming of the death-dealing waves has passed away ; and as they concluded by an instruction to her daughter to ring for her maid, and to reach her eau-de-cologne, the poor girl having obeyed, hastened to escape from the room, in order to reflect in solitude upon the exigences of her painful position.

CHAPTER VII.

A NOBLE SUITOR.

IT is marvellous that although daily experience should suffice to prove that we are at best the poor creatures of circumstance, the mere puppets of accident, we are all prone to believe that nothing can go on satisfactorily unless, even while professing to trust in providence, we undertake to guide the whole action of the machinery ourselves ; and thus, too often, instead of being, as we fondly and blindly imagine, the spiders that weave the web, we find ourselves in the end, merely the flies that have been caught in it.

Such was, in a great degree, the case with

Mr. Trevanion, who having for years fondly hugged the belief that he had taught all around him to bend to his indomitable will, suddenly found himself opposed by the very being upon whose obedience and submission he had calculated the most securely; and as he rolled towards London, in his well-hung and luxurious chariot, he felt like a person stunned by some sudden blow. Calm and concentrated was his rage; and none who looked on him would have suspected the bitterness of the feelings which were masked by the stern and cold demeanour that he successfully maintained.

For the first time in his life the proud and self-reliant man was compelled to acknowledge to himself that the obstacle flung upon the path of his ambition *might* prove beyond even *his* strength to remove. There was that in the eye of his daughter during their late conversation, which convinced him that she had inherited no small portion of his own resolute spirit; and while he dwelt in moody and wordless anger upon her ingratitude, and re-

capitulated to himself all the advantages and indulgences by which he had surrounded her from her very cradle, he never once suffered himself to remember that these had been conferred for his own sake rather than for her's ; and that he had built up a dazzling edifice of greatness upon her loveliness, grace, and talent, of which he would not have laid a single stone, had she been less eminently gifted by nature to work out the cherished purpose of his existence.

He thought of his ancestral home, and his haughty relatives with a pang at his heart—his cloud-dream of crushing the arrogance, and revenging the neglect of Sir Jasper and his wife by presenting to them his daughter as Countess of Downmere, had vanished ; and how was it replaced ?

As the question shaped itself in his mind, Mr. Trevanion crushed the arms which were folded across his breast almost into the flesh, and set his teeth closely, while his lips grew ashy white. He could better have borne any-

thing than this. Then his thoughts reverted to Lady Mary Brookland, whom, despite his daughter's disclaimer, he was far from exonerating from at least a tacit connivance with her nephew ; but on her, he bitterly felt that it would be impossible to wreak his displeasure. A rupture with the person whom in his heart he silently designated as a titled viper, would effectually disorganise his whole household, and overthrow the work of years. Thanks to the persevering system of contempt which he had pursued towards his wife, she had ended by becoming a mere cypher under her own roof, whose authority was not recognized beyond the circle of her dressing-room ; while the free-masonry of rank would, as a matter of course, induce half his aristocratic acquaintance to adopt the cause of the peer's daughter, and to find food for satire rather than sympathy in his own mortification. No ; happen what might, he felt that he must at least keep up appearances with Mr. Elphinstone's aunt, although it by no means followed that he should

for the future place the same implicit reliance on her prudence and loyalty as he had hitherto done.

In any, and every point of view, his position was accordingly a perplexing one; and had he not been made of sterner stuff than the generality of his sex, who, however self-sufficing so long as the wheels of life's chariot run smoothly along the broad highway of prosperity and comfort, are prone to turn for help and solace to others when those same wheels become clogged by the mire, and arrested by by the masses, of doubt and difficulty, he would have been sorely conscious on that unlucky morning of the height and breadth of the barrier which he had himself built up between his own will and the free agency of those about him. As it was, however, he merely sought to discover the most effectual means of meeting and combating the exigences of the emergency in which he was placed, single-handedly, and resolutely.

As we have already shown by the history of

his past life, the nature of Mr. Trevanion was eminently energetic: with him to will had hitherto been to accomplish; and even now he would not suffer himself to believe that he should finally be defeated; Ida's exhibition of spirit had rather startled than convinced him. Women were impulsive, he knew; but he clung to the belief that they were by no means equally consistent. It was the first occasion upon which the wishes of his daughter had been seriously opposed, and she had, almost as a natural consequence, indignantly and determinedly resented that opposition; but when she had taken time to reflect, she must and would see her folly in its true light. It was absurd to suppose that, reared in luxury as she had been, and habituated to have her every desire gratified as soon as expressed, she could be mad enough to cast from her all these advantages to share the comparative penury of a younger brother. No—no—he had only to give her time. Her woman-vanity would do the rest.

The mental argument was a comfortable one ; and before Mr. Trevanion reached town the pressure of his folded arms relaxed, his eye lost some portion of its dark fire, and he breathed more freely.

Suddenly a thought struck him ; he pulled the check-string ; and the carriage, turning down a lateral street, rolled rapidly towards Piccadilly.

The Earl of Downmere was at home ; and as Mr. Trevanion had long been a privileged visitor, he was instantly admitted to the breakfast-room, where his mature lordship sat discussing in solitary state a most *recherché* repast.

Henry Ferdinand, Earl of Downmere, and Baron Woodlyn, was a portly personage of tall stature and stern countenance, who bore his sixty years of life with considerable dignity ; smoothly and composedly too, without any attempt to disguise their amount by hair-dye or cosmetic, like one who scorned such puerilities as at once utterly beneath his own notice, and

beyond that of others. An equal independence of feeling was also visible in his costume, which, although unexceptionable in material, was worn with a careless disregard to every consideration save that of ease, which betrayed the innate selfishness of the individual; one slipperless foot rested upon the seat of a chair in front of him, and looked suspicious of incipient gout; while the knee of the other leg was covered by a napkin which had become considerable sullied during the process of the meal to which his attention was directed. The *Times* lay on the table, luxuriously bathing one extremity of its colossal sheet in the savoury jelly of a *dindon aux truffes*; while his valet, infinitely better dressed than himself, stood behind his chair, reading aloud from the *Morning Post* the fashionable news of the day. The room in which the Peer was seated was gorgeous with gilding, and panelled with family portraits, the most recent in date being a likeness of himself taken in the year of his majority, and forming a woful and saddening

~~contrast~~ with his present appearance. A heavy sofa, and a well cushioned *fautueil* stood near the fire-place, and a large folding screen partially veiled the door; it was indeed evident in all the details of the apartment that the "creature comforts" of this life were by no means disregarded by its owner; and a feeling of surprise was elicited involuntarily that so thorough a self-seeker as my Lord Downmere should for a moment contemplate the possibility of so great a risk as marriage, tending as it could not fail to do, to the disturbance of his long cherished habits of personal indulgence.

The secret lay, however, in the fact that Henry Ferdinand, Earl of Downmere, was the last direct scion of his noble house; his nearest relative and presumptive heir being a second cousin, whom he had never seen, but whom he had nevertheless honoured with his unqualified dislike. Earlier in life he had resisted all the entreaties of his widowed mother to give a new mistress to Woodlyn Castle—"Time enough

yet! Time enough yet!—" was his constant reply to her representations; "I will marry when to do so becomes a duty to my family, but I will not sacrifice myself until I am convinced that it will be necessary to nip the hopes of Mr. Augustus Mordaunt in the bud. Time enough for that, my dear lady-mother."

And so time went on, until the venerable Countess was laid in the family vault; and the dashing young noble grew into a staid middle-aged gentleman, who began to weary of hunting, and to sit longer at the dinner table; to forswear waltzing, and to patronise whist. Nor did time even then stand still, but most pertinaciously did it persevere in its progress until the dark hair, which had once been abundant, grew scanty on the summit of his head, and became thickly streaked with threads of a dull grey; while crows'-feet began to gather beneath his eyes, and to pucker the corners of his mouth. In short, as we have already shewn, his lordship had attained to the ripe age of sixty; when even he was reluctantly compelled to admit that

if Mr. Augustus Mordaunt were indeed to be baulked of the coveted peerage, it might be as well no longer to delay the bestowal of his name and rank upon a wife.

Then came the difficulty of selection ; for, aware of the greatness of the honour to be conferred, the broken-down *roué* was by no means inclined to bestow such advantages upon any woman who could not secure to him a very ample equivalent. Young she must be,—that was a *sine quâ non*—handsome, that was equally indispensable—and wealthy, for he was resolved to exact the price of his coronet—beyond these requisites, however, he asked nothing more : he could dispense with high birth, provided that the respectability of her family was unquestionable ; and to her disposition and temper he was perfectly indifferent, being most agreeably satisfied that no wife, be she who she might, would long venture to oppose his will.

Even when he had conceded thus much, however, the difficulty was no slight one

as many young, beautiful, and well-dowered women were to the full as conscious of the value of their advantages as Lord Downmere of his own, and unhesitatingly declined to barter them for an empty title: and thus he had been half a dozen times civilly rejected by as many reigning beauties, when he accidentally made the acquaintance of Ida Trevanion. The repulses to which his lordship had by this time been subjected had, however, taught him caution; he began to understand that people as frequently overdo things in this world by a want of judgment, as they neglect what is necessary to be done by a want of energy; and he consequently resolved on the present occasion to ascertain in how far the *prestige* of his rank would influence the father of the lady in his favour, and to what extent he might trust to Mr. Trevanion's authority over his daughter, before he committed himself by a direct offer of his hand.

No proceeding could have been more judicious under the circumstances; and accord-

ingly but a few weeks elapsed ere the peer, who had most graciously extended the right hand of friendship to the princely merchant, became satisfied that Mr. Trevanion would consider no sacrifice too great by which he could place a coronet on the brow of his beautiful heiress. Lord Downmere easily detected his weakness, but he was far from suspecting the motive; and while he haughtily, and somewhat contemptuously, assured himself that the man of commerce estimated his rank and birth at their full value, he was little aware that in this instance the commoner was by far the prouder individual of the two—the true nobleman in heart and feeling—and that the ancient blood which throbbed and leaped in his pulses when the earl at length confided to him the passion which he professed to feel for the fair Ida, was quickened, not by the prospect of a titled son-in-law, but by that held out to him of social self-assertion.

The character and temperament of Mr. Trevanion had, moreover, satisfied Lord Down-

mere that he was not a man likely to yield his own judgment or wishes to those of his child upon so serious a point as marriage, when he saw him steadily enforce them on all around him, upon occasions of comparatively minor importance; and thus, having secured the consent of her father, he took little pains to ingratiate himself with the young lady in any other way than by making the most liberal settlements; a generosity greatly increased by his consciousness that the magnificent fortune of his intended bride rendered it altogether supererogatory; and while Mr. Sydney Elphinstone was breathing his tale of love into the ears of the listening beauty, his self-complacent rival was trotting his hack in the ring, and dozing over crown points at the whist-table of his club.

When the pretensions of Lord Downmere were made known to Miss Trevanion by her father she smiled incredulously, and merely asked if the poor old gentleman were insane; but when she found his suit urged upon her

firmly and imperatively, she coldly declared that she would never consent to listen to its repetition. The rage of Mr. Trevanion was unbounded at this open opposition to his will, but he succeeded by a strong effort in controlling it; and abruptly informing her that he should ere long insist on her obedience, he sternly left the room; while his weak minded wife who "loved a lord," not, like her haughty helpmate, as a glittering tool wherewith to work out his own purposes, but purely and wholly for the pleasure of feeling that she was of sufficient importance to be the associate of nobles, poured forth a rapid flood of wondering reproaches upon the devoted head of her daughter; could not conceive what she could expect if she could afford to refuse an earl—to wear a countess's coronet—and perhaps, for anything she knew to the contrary, to become a member of Her Majesty's household. It was really too bad—it was cruel to *her*, for she should have liked so much to have been the mother-in-law of a peer. However, she had

one consolation, and that was, that she knew Mr. Trevanion well enough to be quite sure that Ida must yield in the end, for it was of no use to attempt to oppose his will.

“And is it possible, Mamma;” asked the proud girl with an indignant blush; “that you can wish to see the happiness of your only child sacrificed to such puerilities as those you have mentioned?”

“Nonsense, Ida;” was the peevish retort; “surely, with my experience, I must know best what constitutes happiness; I tell you that if I had married a peer, I should have been the happiest woman alive.”

Miss Trevanion sighed. She had too much respect for her spirit-crushed mother to express the contempt with which she listened to her childish wailings; and from that day neither of her parents had reverted to the subject of Lord Downmere’s proposal until the morning upon which we first introduced them to our readers.

CHAPTER VII.

SOCIAL TACTICS.

EVEN at the close of the unpromising conversation recorded in the last chapter, Mr. Trevanion had not, as we have already stated, abandoned all hope of ultimate success ; but, misjudging the lofty nature of his daughter, had so far deluded himself before he reached town, as to believe that the vanity of the young beauty was piqued by the carelessness of Lord Downmere's courtship.

“Natural enough ! Natural enough !” he murmured to himself with a grim smile ; “He has played his cards badly, and deserves to lose her ; nor would I move a finger to assist him,

were it not for my own sake. But he is necessary to my scheme of vengeance, and I must give him a hint to be more cautious for the future."

And, full of his newly born-hope, the stately merchant entered the breakfast room of his noble friend.

"Hah! Trevanion, my good fellow;" was the greeting of the peer, as, with a portion of *paté de foie gras* provided upon his fork, he extended two fingers of his left hand to his visitor; "You are early to-day. Have you breakfasted? or will you join me?—No—well, then, take a seat, and excuse me if I finish my breakfast. How are the ladies?"

"Perfectly well, my lord, I am obliged to you; and my somewhat untimely visit ——"

"Never ill-timed, Trevanion, never ill-timed;" interposed the host; "always delighted to see you, as a matter of course. I was about to drive to Richmond to-day to pay my respects to my fair enslaver, and to inquire after her health."

“I am glad to hear it;” said the merchant; “and trust that you will still persist in your intention, for I will frankly tell you that it was to suggest a little more devotion on your part to Ida that I drove to Piccadilly this morning. Young ladies, as your lordship must be aware, like to be wooed as well as won, and I begin to fear that the paucity of your visits has already produced a bad effect upon the mind of my daughter.”

“Pooh! pooh!” chuckled the old earl; “you deceive yourself. Girls are fond enough no doubt of being dangled after by a bevy of smart young fellows, who, like French poodles, are skilled in the art to fetch and carry; but when a man reaches my age, he is only in the way in a lady’s drawing-room; and I am much mistaken if Miss Trevanion does not see the matter with the same eyes as myself. She is a fine creature, a very fine creature, and will adorn her coronet, but I have no intention to make her purchase it too dearly. I am a man of the world, Trevanion, and have

a most particular aversion to degenerating into a bore."

"My *dear* lord ——"

"Nay, nay, no disclaimers. We are both rational beings; I have a sincere regard for your daughter—I admire her exceedingly—she is a superb woman,—and as Countess of Downmere will, I am convinced, do honour both to her father and her husband; but I do not expect impossibilities; and I am as little inclined to interfere with her comfort, as I am to sacrifice my own. I have, moreover, already seen enough of Miss Trevanion to feel certain that I am pursuing the best method of securing her favour."

"You must pardon me if I persist in doubting it;" replied the visitor; "Ida has been so long accustomed to adulation and homage that her vanity cannot fail to be piqued by your apparent indifference, contrasting as it does so forcibly with the devoted attentions of the other candidates for her preference. I can quite understand that your lordship con-

eeives (and very properly) that the honour which you have conferred on her by the offer of your hand must necessarily more than counterbalance all such puerile considerations ; but women, especially handsome ones, are capricious and exacting ; nor can we, while our mighty world itself works on such pigmy hinges, afford to be too severe upon them."

" Well, well ;" said Lord Downmere somewhat impatiently ; " I shall decidedly drive to Richmond to-day, and come to a more explicit understanding with the young lady herself. I should, no doubt, have done so before, had you not assured me that I might safely leave the affair in your hands ; an arrangement which struck me as being, under all circumstances, an excellent one. I never, even in my young days, was a lady's man ; nor should I have so far disorganised all my habits at my present time of life as to take a wife, were it not that the duty which I owe to my name demands it. I ask of the Countess of Downmere to give me an heir in return for the

coronet which I place upon her brow, and I exact no more. As for love, my good Sir, it is a mere myth in the fashionable world at the present day ; an *ignis fatuus*, a will-o'-the-wisp, just as unattainable as the rainbow ; and I am too reasonable a man to clutch at a vapour."

"But surely, my lord, you will not be rash enough to explain yourself thus to my daughter?"

"No, no, Trevanion ; I have not walked through the byways of society for so many years not to understand the sex at least better than that. I have, as you may perceive, no remnant of romance left in me, always supposing that I ever possessed any ; and I have no faith in 'mutual affection,' and 'disinterested sacrifice,' and 'self-immolation,' and all this fiddle-faddle which supplies the raw-material of the novel-writers. When I officially offer myself to Miss Trevanion, I shall do so by urging upon her acceptance my rank and the family diamonds ; I shall talk to her,

not of my own feelings, but of Woodlyn Castle and Downmere Abbey ; not of the colour of her eyes, but of the style of her equipages ;— I shall appeal to her ambition, not to her heart ; excite her self-value, not her sensibilities ; and, rely on it that my method is the only rational one with any woman who has passed her teens, and learned to look at life in its true aspect. Taxes upon vanity do not require to be voted by parliament ; they can always be levied without difficulty ; and I am greatly deceived in you, my good friend, if you have reared your daughter for the purpose of seeing her settle herself in a cottage overgrown with honeysuckles, and over-run with earwigs."

"Far from it, my lord; far from it;" replied Mr. Trevanion ; "nor is Ida Trevanion at all calculated for a life of privation and struggle ; a conviction which tended to increase my satisfaction when your lordship did me the favour to demand her hand. Indeed, so thoroughly resolved have I ever been that she should only

marry into that sphere in which she is so well calculated to shine, and thus to re-integrate not only herself, but me also, in the position which I lost through the injustice of my relatives, that I assured her—and with truth—that in the event of her disappointing my wishes, not one shilling of my property should ever devolve to her.”

“A forcible argument;” smiled the earl complacently, stroking down the leg which rested on the chair before him; “and one which will, no doubt, prove more efficacious than a whole volume of sentiment. You are a sensible man, Mr. Trevanion, a very sensible man; and the conviction that you were superior even to your present position—highly honourable as that is in itself, I admit,—was, to me one great inducement to overlook what some of my friends were inclined to consider as an inequality of rank, when I offered my hand to your daughter.”

The blood rose to the cheek of the merchant. “Your lordship does me honour;” he said

coldly; "but I trust that even elevated as your position undoubtedly is, the contemplated marriage can scarcely be regarded a *mésalliance*. My own family ——"

"I know it, my good Sir, I know it;" hastily interposed the peer; "on her *father's* side Miss Trevanion had every right to pretend to the rank which I am happy enough to offer to her—while, as regards her maternal descent, why, we must accept her youth, beauty, and accomplishments as a substitute for blood. I have already carefully considered all the bearings of the question, and am satisfied with the result. It is, however, unfortunate that you are not on terms with your uncle, as his presence at the ceremony would have given a *prestige* to the affair which would have told well in the world. Not that the thing is material, certainly not; *my* position is one which, as a natural consequence, renders me independent of such considerations; and I confess that I shall regard myself as a very happy man when I become the possessor of so much youth and

beauty ; and feel, as I shall have every right to do, that I have fulfilled to the letter the duty which I owed to my family."

"I am obliged by so flattering an assurance ;" said Mr. Trevanion, though he looked infinitely less gratified than he sought to appear ; "nor do I apprehend that your lordship need fear any very severe animadversion on the part of your friends when the dowry of my daughter is taken into consideration in addition to her personal merits."

"True, true ;" replied the earl, somewhat impatiently ; "but, after all, are we not rather premature in our self-gratulation, if, as you hinted a while back, I have failed to find favour in the eyes of the young lady herself?"

"Nay, nay ; I can admit no such construction of my remark ;" objected the merchant ; "I merely sought to impress upon your lordship the policy of a little more attention on your part."

"While I on the contrary give myself no small credit for my diplomacy, my good friend ;"

said Lord Downmere; "charming as she is, my fair bride-elect is still a woman, and she may have no especial taste for a husband whose years outnumber those of her father; thus, rely on it, the less I absorb her time and attention the more likely she will be to overlook the disparity, which is, I flatter myself, the only valid objection which she can offer to our union."

"I think, my lord;" said Mr. Trevanion, "that you do Ida injustice as well as yourself; Time—when we bring ourselves to look the truth steadily in the face—is to the full as much our friend as our enemy. He plants wrinkles in our foreheads, I admit, but even while doing so, he engrafts wisdom in our hearts; he strews threads of silver among our hair, but he condenses experience and warning in our minds, and thus more than compensates for his petty larcenies by a full-handed liberality which we are too slow to acknowledge until its actual value is forced upon us."

"A very happy view of the case, my good

Sir, and one which deserves to become popular ;” replied the peer, petting his gouty leg with increased tenderness ; “ though, unfortunately, it is never likely to do so. It is a trite saying that grey hairs are honourable, and there can be no doubt of the fact ; but it is equally certain that it is an honour with which every one is satisfied to dispense as long as possible. However, as you advise me to venture upon a more assiduous course of homage, I shall follow your counsel, only hoping that you may have been able to inspire your brilliant daughter with a portion of your own wisdom.”

“ I am glad that you have arrived at such a resolution, my lord, for trust me when I assure you that no woman’s heart is to be won by proxy.”

“ Heart ? pshaw ! do not let us travel back into Utopia, Trevanion ; I have already been sufficiently explicit as to my anticipations on that score. Hearts are mere heavy luggage with which to be hampered on the journey of

life, and it is far better to travel untrammelled. It is Miss Trevanion's *hand* which I have asked of you, and which I shall ask of herself; she is a gentlewoman and a woman of the world; she will, therefore, understand what is due to both of us, and I require no more.—I wish that I could induce you to try one of these *côtelettes au jus*—my cook is famous for them.”

“I am obliged to you, my lord, but I have already breakfasted.”

“I am sorry for it, for I can conscientiously recommend them. However, you know best. Well then, I will decidedly drive to Richmond this morning, and settle the business. I am no friend to delay when once a thing is decided in my own mind; and, under all circumstances, I think that the sooner matters are concluded on this occasion the better. The season is nearly over, town is beginning to thin, and Miss Trevanion will not, in all probability, be averse to spending her summer at Woodlyn Castle.”

We have said that Mr. Trevanion was a proud man, and so in truth he was; and yet, so resolutely did he cling to his one darling project, that he bent his haughty spirit to tolerate the insolent egotism of the cold-hearted noble, who was, should he succeed in overcoming the repugnance of his daughter, to render that daughter the instrument of his revenge upon his relations. Had he witnessed a similar exhibition of self-abasement in another, his contempt would have known no bounds, but he was blinded to his own degradation by the wretched idiosyncrasy which he had nourished for years, and which had been the hidden spring of his every thought and action.

That Ida, the proud, the beautiful, and the gifted, should be wooed after such a fashion might well have revolted him, but he would not look beyond the fact that the wooer was one whose rank and station must compel the haughty spirit of Sir Jasper to bend before him; while they would, in all probability, induce him to

sue for a renewal of that intercourse which he had been so eager to terminate for ever. The only doubt by which he was tormented was caused by Ida herself; he did not forget throughout the interview which he had courted, and during which he had suffered an amount of mortification greater than any to which he had ever been subjected since the day on which he became an alien and an outcast from the home of his ancestors—he did not for one moment forget that when he had parted from his daughter, he had left her in no mood to tolerate the addresses of her titled suitor; she might persist in the insane resolve which she had announced to him—she might peremptorily decline the hand of the Earl, and thus thwart the hope of his whole life—she might—but no! Lord Downmere had truly said that, after all, beautiful as she was, gifted as she was, she was a woman, and

‘Therefore to be won,’

as she no doubt would be, by the glitter of a

coronet, with its concomitant attractions. And so Mr. Trevanion sagely resolved to think no more of the matter until he returned home to ascertain the result of the peer's visit; and he accordingly proceeded to the city, transacted business as usual, authorised the transfer of thousands, dictated letters, and occupied himself as he was wont to do, haunted throughout every detail by the flashing eye and firm demeanour of his rebel child, and wincing from time to time as the suspicion would force itself upon him, that her will might after all prove as unbending as his own.

CHAPTER IX.

A LOVER AND HIS MISTRESS.

THE life of Miss Trevanion had hitherto flowed on with all the smoothness of a rivulet, shadowed perhaps at times by some slight sorrow, as the stream is darkened by an over-hanging bough, but soon recovering its brilliancy, and once more gliding gladly onward under the broad light of a sunny heaven. Happy in the present and confident in the future, the petted heiress had known no real care ; nor had she even guessed how fatally her own nature was constituted to ruffle the current of its existence when its tide should be impeded by adverse circumstances, until she became conscious

of a growing partiality for Sydney Elphinstone. When the suspicion of this preference first arose in her mind, she struggled resolutely against it, for not only did she at once perceive that such an attachment must inevitably prove distasteful to her father, to whose ambition she was no stranger, but it also revolted her own good sense when she remembered that she was several years his senior ; while it must at the same time be confessed that her vanity took the alarm, as such was by no means the realisation of her previous dreams.

Accustomed from her earliest youth to regard high rank as the foundation of all earthly honour and even happiness, she had ever associated the idea of marriage with luxury and station. She had, in fact, dreamed as girls ever dream before that inner life, which is the most powerful position of existence, is aroused ; and while fancy supplies the place of feeling, such baseless visions suffice to employ the imagination ; but where the nature is finely organised they seldom endure long ; the heart makes its low

whispers heard, faintly indeed, it may be, for a time, but so perseveringly that they cannot long remain unheeded ; and then commences the stern conflict between the real and the ideal, the sharp warfare between the outer world of action, and the inner world of passion, which may indeed be hidden from the crowd, but never wholly deadened save in despair or in the grave.

Miss Trevanion was startled by the vehemence of her own feelings. Accustomed as she had been to see herself the first object with all around her, the idol and the pride of her family, to whom her every wish was a law, she had never suspected the depth and strength of her own nature; but when, ere Mr. Elphinstone had ventured to hint at his admiration for herself, she on one occasion saw him apparently engrossed by a fair girl for whom she had previously felt a warm regard, she became painfully aware that she could hate as intensely as she could love ; and that her life was destined to be one of perfect happiness or

misery. The discovery startled her, and she strove earnestly to liberate herself from the growing thralldom of a passion which both her reason and her pride condemned; but she found both pride and reason powerless before it; high-sounding titles became mere empty words; wealth and station worthless units in the heart's reckoning; and when, after a brief and ineffectual struggle against a weakness for which none could blame her more bitterly than she accused herself, she consented to pledge her faith to the nephew of Lady Mary Brooklands, she yielded up her whole soul to the new and delicious feeling which the assurance of his affection rendered legitimate and sacred.

Still, however, there were moments when she shrank appalled from the strange knowledge which she had so suddenly acquired of herself—when she became aware of the smothered fire within, which, should it ever burst forth, must involve not only her own wretchedness, but that of those who were most dear to her; her pride, her vanity, and her ambi-

tion were but as straws borne before the lava-stream of her passion, and buried beneath its burning tide. She learnt—and it was a fearful lesson—that while she could give away her whole heart without one reservation, so could she, in like manner, revenge the perfidy by which the full and perfect gift might be cast back upon her.

As this conviction grew upon her mind, she thrust the massy braids from her burning brow, and literally gasped for breath. “It is unwomanly—it is fiendish”—she murmured to herself; “and yet I feel that even so it is. I love him with all the impetuous fervour of my nature; but should he fail—should I be deceived in him—that love will burn into a flame of hate that must destroy us both. Why did he ever cross my path? Why was he thrust upon me? Tutored as I have been for a far different fate, why should he have been gifted with the power of teaching me that I had a heart? I might have gone through life as I had commenced it, toying with trifles, and

emulous only of admiration ; but now I have cast all my chance of happiness upon one stake, and should I lose it, I shall be worse than beggared !”

It was from such a train of thought as this that Miss Trevanion was aroused by the announcement of the earl's visit. A more timid spirit than her own might have been occupied by her late misunderstanding with her father—the first, be it remembered, which had ever occurred between them,—and by his threat of making her want of obedience to his wishes the signal of their total estrangement ; but not even for an instant had her thoughts been engrossed by that circumstance, important as it was to her future fate. The intensity of her passion, and the wild jealousy of an exacting nature, rendered all other considerations insignificant in her eyes. She remembered, she felt, only the *possibility* of change in her heart's idol ; she cared not for the struggle, the sacrifices, by which she must win him to herself ; she dwelt only on the dread that when won, he

might be found wanting——And then?—what would remain to her then? The suffocating throbs of her tortured heart, the fire which shot from her flashing eyes, and the fierce clenching of her slender fingers, afforded a mute but eloquent reply.

As Lord Downmere entered the apartment, Miss Trevanion rose calmly from her seat. It is often in moments of the most intense emotion that strong natures exhibit the greatest power of self-control. She did not dislike the titled egotist who sought her hand, she simply despised him; and although she intuitively suspected the purport of his visit, she received him with as much indifference as though it had merely been dictated by common courtesy.

The storm of passion which had just swept over her spirit had meanwhile tended to heighten her peculiar style of beauty; a warm flush burnt upon her cheek; a brilliant light danced in her eye, and there was a proud stateliness in her whole appearance which for a moment startled even the unimpressible peer.

"I will ring and inform my mother of your lordship's visit, with your permission," she said coldly, as she advanced to the bell; but ere she had reached it, she was arrested by the voice of the earl, who exclaimed eagerly: "By no means, Miss Trevanion. I beg that Mrs. Trevanion may not be disturbed on my account. My visit was to yourself."

The lady withdrew her hand, and resumed her seat.

"You will no doubt divine its purport;" continued Lord Downmere with more embarrassment than he had ever before felt in the presence of any individual upon whom he believed himself about to confer a favour; "your father was with me this morning, and he has led me to anticipate—to hope—that my presence here to-day will not be unwelcome to you."

"By no means, my lord;" was the reply; "this is the hour at which we are accustomed to receive our friends."

"But it is not simply as a friend that I am

here;" resumed the earl; "you must be quite aware, Miss Trevanion, of the admiration—the regard—which I have long felt for you; and you will not therefore be surprised to learn that my errand is to lay myself and my coronet at your feet, and to declare to you that I shall be the happiest of men should I prevail on you to accept the offering."

"I am not surprised, my lord;" said Miss Trevanion, retaining all her previous composure; "I will not be guilty of the pitiful affectation of assuming an astonishment which I do not feel; but while I beg of you to receive my acknowledgments for the honour which you desire to confer on me, I am compelled to decline it."

"Very prettily expressed;" smiled the peer emphatically; "I am aware that such is always the first reply of every lady under similar circumstances; but after what has passed between your excellent father and myself, I feel confident that before we part we shall come to a better understanding. In

short, my dear Miss Trevanion, after mature reflection, I have arrived at the conviction that you are the only woman upon whom I could confer, without one misgiving, the title of Countess of Downmere. I am not a young man, but I can still appreciate all the perfections of your sex; and in yourself ——”

“I entreat of you, my lord, not to deceive yourself;” interposed his listener; “my words were so far from being words of course, that I must request you to receive them in all the strength and fulness of their meaning. I am greatly flattered by your good opinion, and shall be proud to retain you as a friend, but that can be the only bond between us.”

“You cannot be serious, Miss Trevanion——”

“Perfectly so. In seeking my hand your lordship has been guilty of a grave mistake. We are by no means suited to each other.”

“Is it the incompatibility of age?” demanded the earl.

‘By no means;’ was the reply; as a slight flush rose to the cheek of the lady; “I do

not deem the question of age of the slightest consideration in affairs like the present."

"What then can be your objection? I can offer you rank, wealth, and station."

"I am quite aware of the fact, and must be excused if I confess that I attach little value to mere worldly advantages."

"The finest diamonds in England, not excepting Her Majesty's;" followed up the persevering peer.

Ida smiled a smile of scorn; as she said, disdainfully; "Affection and regard are not marketable commodities even in this commercial country; and, as to the diamonds, your lordship will, no doubt find little difficulty in inducing some far more worthy person than myself to wear them."

"I confess," said the discomfited suitor; "that I do not understand your meaning, Miss Trevanion, when you so unhesitatingly declare that we are not suited to each other; I am by no means of an exacting nature; you will have no interference to apprehend from

me, and I cannot help thinking that when once united we should find many points of resemblance ; or, at all events, constant communion would soon induce it."

"Your lordship must pardon me if I declare that I should consider the experiment to be highly dangerous ;" was the reply ; "souls of mere ordinary calibre may lose their distinctive qualities, and, blending into one common mass, neutralise each other ; but when individuals are possessed of refined and elastic minds, they do well to remember that there is a point at which attraction may change into repulsion, and not rashly incur so great and fatal a risk."

"In the present case there can at least be no danger of such a result ;" said Lord Downmere ; "and I confess that after my late interview with her father, I was altogether unprepared for such determined coldness on the part of Miss Trevanion ; nor is it quite fair to augment my regret at her obduracy by forcing upon me the conviction that she is a wit as well as a beauty."

“Do not say so, my lord; do not say so;” exclaimed his companion, earnestly; “I am the last of my sex, to strive after the reputation of a wit. It is like laying down the cestus of Venus to brandish the club of Hercules, and a woman’s strength is, or ought to be, unequal to the task. But your lordship has twice alluded to a recent interview with my father. You surely cannot seek to infer that he led you to believe—to anticipate—”

“Pardon me, Miss Trevanion; I received every encouragement from your father to prosecute my suit—every promise of his own influence—and, such being the case, you will readily understand that I am not to be lightly discouraged. Despite your disclaimer, I suspect that I have in reality taken you by surprise, and that you require time for consideration. You shall have it. I can afford to wait for a few days in order to secure so rich a prize. I will not intrude upon you further upon this occasion. I have faith in the future; and shall leave Mr. Trevanion to ex-

plain to you certain points—worldly points—which in the enthusiasm of your age, you have in all probability overlooked.”

“ I am obliged by your intention, my Lord, but I must request that you will not leave me with so mistaken a view of my character and sentiments,” said, the young lady. “ I grieve, deeply grieve, that my father should have misled you, and trust that you will at least exonerate me from the imputation of a similar error.”

“ Good morning, Miss Trevanion ;” said the Earl, blandly stretching forth his hand ; “ I leave my case to the advocacy of your father, for, as I before remarked, he can, with more propriety than myself, place before you in their fitting light the advantages which you appear so willing to forego. Be good enough to offer my respects to Mrs. Trevanion. I shall wait your final decision with impatience.”

And as he ceased speaking, Lord Downmere bowed himself out of the room.

CHAPTER X.

A TRIAL OF STRENGTH.

THE dressing-bell had rung before Mr. Trevanion reached home, and he was consequently compelled to wait with such patience as he could command for the information which he was anxious to obtain of the result of Lord Downmere's appeal to his daughter, a circumstance which by no means tended to tranquillise his nerves, as the more he suffered his thoughts to dwell upon the previous conversation between himself and Ida, the less confidence he felt in his power to shake her resolution. Like a child who has succeeded in building up a card-house story by story until it has reached

a height almost unhopèd-for, he dreaded lest his next movement might bring the whole unstable edifice in ruin about him; and yet the move must be made; the work must be terminated; and every moment of suspense became intolerable to him. He hastened his toilette, and descended to the drawing-room, although aware that even should his daughter be already there, a subject of such intense importance to both of them could not be broached with any prospect of a final arrangement in the brief interval between that time and the announcement of dinner; but as the moment approached which was to decide the fruition or the overthrow of his cherished hope, he became restless and irritable, and the self-control which he had exercised throughout the previous portion of the day altogether abandoned him. He threw himself heavily into his well-cushioned chair, caught up the daily paper which lay upon his reading-table, 'pished' and 'pshawed' over its columns as if each had contained some intelligence

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peculiarly distasteful to him, and finally suffered it to fall from his hand, and sank into a deep fit of musing. That his reflections were anything but pleasant ones might be detected at once, for his brow darkened, and he beat nervously upon the floor with his foot, as he sat with his head bent upon his breast, and his gaze riveted upon the carpet. Throughout the whole of his career, with Mr. Trevanion to will had been to accomplish. Even as a boy he had never, as we have shown, suffered himself to be discouraged even under the most trying circumstances, but having fixed his eye steadily upon one point, he had exerted all the energies of his mind to reach it. For this purpose he had compelled his haughty spirit to commerce—for this purpose he had united himself to a woman for whose intellect he entertained the most sovereign contempt, and to whose person he was utterly indifferent; for this purpose he had tolerated and even courted a man whose only recommendation was his exalted position in

society; and now, when the goal was almost reached, he suddenly found himself thwarted by his own child; found an apparently impassible barrier raised upon his own hearth; and after having compelled success on the broad highway of the world, discovered that utter defeat might await him in his home, where he had hitherto believed himself to be all-powerful.

To his stern and unbending nature this first check, end, as it might, was gall and wormwood; he felt humbled, when he found himself compelled to measure his strength with that of a mere girl, for as such he still regarded his daughter; it was monstrous to feel that she could venture to oppose his wishes, be they what they might, and still more monstrous to know that she held his destiny in her hands. He was impatient for her appearance; he believed that he could instantly divine from her manner the determination at which she had arrived; but first Mrs. Trevanion entered the room with her faint greeting, to which he replied only by a

slight movement of the head, as she slid into her accustomed seat, and drew her shawl about her without hazarding a second remark; and next Lady Mary Brooklands sailed majestically in, heralded by the sharp rustling of her rich dress, and smiling blandly upon her host, who, had he dared to betray the real feeling with which he once more met her, would not assuredly have welcomed her appearance by the words of studied courtesy which he compelled himself to utter; and then, just when the last bell rang, the butler as he threw open the door, at once admitted Miss Trevanion and announced dinner.

The merchant turned one glance—and but one—upon his daughter, ere, according to his usual custom, he offered his arm to Lady Mary, and the result of that glance was unsatisfactory, affording as it did no solution of the mystery which he sought to penetrate. She was as calm, as graceful, and as self-possessed as though her fair brow had never been ruffled by an anxiety or a care; and as he

proceeded to the dining-room the stern expression of Mr. Trevanion's features became sterner still. Had she betrayed emotion of any kind, had he detected the faintest flush of anger upon her cheek, the slightest flash of defiance in her eye, the least tremor in her voice, as she moved across the floor to assist her mother from the room, he would have been satisfied, for he might have read irresolution, fear, or temper in such indications of feeling, but he had not studied human nature so closely for years without learning that a settled purpose never betrays itself by petty weaknesses.

At table Miss Trevanion was neither more silent nor more voluble than usual; her well-modulated voice retained its accustomed tone as she addressed himself; she listened to her mother's captious complaints and to Lady Mary's brilliant small-talk as patiently and as courteously as was her habit; and vainly did her father watch for one symptom of discomposure or uneasiness.

“The struggle will be a sharp one;” murmured the merchant to himself, as on the termination of the meal the ladies retired, and he rose and paced the floor like a caged lion; “well, be it so; it will not be the first from which I have come out the victor. She conceives my threat to have been an idle one, and does not believe that I shall meet her determination with one as firm. She presumes upon my affection while she makes no effort to retain it. She does not know that, like a child playing with the fire, she will be the victim of her own folly. But it shall be so: I will not be the only sacrifice. The labour of a whole existence shall not be lost through the headstrong obstinacy of a woman, without her bearing her own share of the suffering. Let her refuse Lord Downmere at her peril.—She shall become his wife—she shall work out the one great purpose of my existence, or I will disown her for ever—cast her off to the poverty which she affects to treat so lightly—leave her free to beggar her-

self with her penniless husband, and to feel how widely the fact of such a sacrifice differs from its theory.—But I must learn what passed between her and the earl—I was a fool to urge his coming here to-day while the spirit of resistance was still strong upon her: no doubt the selfish dotard piqued her pride by his assumption of superiority. I should have been present at the interview; but all is not yet lost; the hour of weakness is over; she owes me the obedience of a child, and I will exact it.”

Full of this resolution, Mr. Trevanion passed into the library, and ringing the bell with violence, directed that his daughter might be informed that he desired her presence. His summons was promptly obeyed, and he had scarcely seated himself, when with a calm step and a steady eye, Ida entered the apartment.

“I have sent for you, Miss Trevannion;” he commenced as she advanced towards him; “in order to learn the result of Lord Down-

mere's visit; with his motive I am already acquainted; and I now wish to hear—what reply was made to his proposal."

"It was declined, Sir, definitively, but I trust courteously."

"And did his lordship bow to such a decision, may I ask? Was he satisfied to receive as a final answer the rejection with which you saw fit to requite the honour that he had done you?"

"I hope, Sir, that I left no doubt upon his mind of the sincerity of my meaning. I should scorn to trifle with the feelings of an individual who had evinced towards me the preference expressed by Lord Downmere."

"That is no answer to my question, Miss Trevanion," said her father harshly; "I desire to know whether his lordship parted from you, convinced that his suit was unsuccessful."

"As far as regarded my own feelings and determination, most certainly,"

"But he did not, nevertheless, consent to

resign his pretensions—Is that what I am to understand ?”

“Precisely. He professed to leave his cause in your hands, Sir, believing, or affecting to believe, that his rank, his wealth, and the family diamonds would plead in his favour more forcibly with yourself than with me.”

“Be careful, young lady, you assume a tone strangely unbecoming in our relative positions. Do not add disrespect to your disobedience.”

“You mistake me painfully if you suppose me capable of sarcasm ;” said Miss Trevanion, and for a moment her lip quivered ; “No, Sir ; the contempt which my tone perhaps involuntarily betrayed, was called forth by the scorn I felt for the man who could suspect *my* father to be guilty of so much meanness.”

“Seat yourself, Ida, and listen to me ;” said Mr. Trevanion more mildly than he had yet spoken ; “It is essential that we should perfectly understand each other, for this is an important crisis in both our lives. Hence-

forth we must be everything or nothing to each other. Reflect ~~seriously~~ on what I am ~~about to say~~. My life has been, as you know, one long period of mortification, brightened only by the vision of one day paying back into the bosoms of those who injured me the bitterness with which they filled my own. This I could not do simply by amassing wealth—had it been otherwise I should have required no co-adjutor in the struggle—but by placing myself on an equality with the noblest and the proudest in the land. My hope rested on you, Ida, on you, so richly gifted by nature, to overcome the last obstacle with which I had to contend. It may now be realised—you have a peer of the realm at your feet,—the coronet of a countess awaiting your acceptance—will you disappoint my hopes? will you compel me to curse the hour in which I trusted to the strength and devotion of a daughter's love?"

The beautiful head of Ida drooped as she listened. She had nerved herself to contend

against violence and opposition ; she had felt strong in the conviction of her right of free action, and of her privilege to bestow her hand where she had already bestowed her affections ; but although her resolution did not waver for an instant, the altered manner of her father sent a pang to her heart, and for a moment rendered her unable to reply. Mr. Trevanion instantly perceived his advantage, and hastened to profit by the impression which he had made.

“You will not do this ;” he pursued earnestly ; “I feel that you will not by one mad act negative the anticipations of years. Remember, Ida, all that I have been to you. Look around you, and ask yourself if you have hitherto found cause to envy, not merely the fate of those of your own rank in society, but that of others far more highly born. You have been the child of luxury and indulgence ; you have never formed a wish which I have not sought to gratify ; I have spared nothing—neither gold nor exertion—to fit you for the station

which I was resolved that you should attain ; and, up to this day, you have seconded me nobly ; nor can I believe that you will fail me now."

" I am grateful—most grateful "—faltered out his listener.

" And you have cause to be so ;" continued Mr. Trevanion, overlooking in his eagerness to compel his daughter's submission to his will, that an open avowal of his motives for the indulgence upon which he dilated must necessarily weaken his hold upon her feelings ; " for, I need scarcely explain to you, who so well understand my nature, that I should never have made such sacrifices had I not had an ulterior object in view. I acted in regard to yourself upon the same principle which has regulated every action of my life. Once more I tell you frankly that you have been reared and educated to assist in the prosecution of my one darling scheme ; I have watched and waited patiently for the moment in which it should be realised—that moment has come at last, and I

look to you to secure me against a failure which would blight my whole after-life."

"And you ask me to further the gratification of a vindictive feeling by the sacrifice of my own hopes of happiness, if indeed I understand you rightly ;" said his daughter, with a heightened colour ; "and you seek to impress upon me that I owe the tenderness and care which have been lavished upon me to no affection on your part,—to compel me to feel that I have been regarded less as a child than as a tool which has been gradually tempered to its destined use ! Surely, Sir, you employ strange arguments to enforce your purpose. Have the talents which you pride yourself on having nurtured ; the beauty which you confess has reconciled you to my sex ; no higher value in your eyes—in the eyes of a parent, and he the parent of an only child,—than any mere base and sordid agent by which you may hope to accomplish your wishes ? You have said that it is essential we should understand each other ; do we do so now ? In pity tell

me, no ! I have so long paid you back every kindness in love and reverence, that I dare not trust myself to think that my affection has been unrequited."

"I shall believe in that affection when I see its fruits;" said Mr. Trevanion coldly; "it is easy to profess a feeling which involves neither sacrifice nor trial; it is only to be trusted when it stands the ordeal of both."

"Thus then suffer me to test the depth of yours, my father!" exclaimed his daughter imploringly; "am I not your child — your only one?—and will you seek, for the vain gratification of a vengeance which may after all fail in the attainment of its object, to condemn me to a blighted and loveless existence? Can an alliance with a Lord Downmere, a man whom, were it not for the mere accident of rank, you would despise, ennoble you in the eyes of your estranged and haughty relatives? Will they not rather scorn you for a weakness which must shame your noble nature?"

"Permit me to be the best judge of the re-

sult of my own actions, Miss Trevanion ;" was the curt rejoinder ; " you, in your ignorance of the world, are quite unable to form a rational opinion on such a subject. Perhaps, when you find the door of your father closed against you, and are put forth to strive and struggle with the world, as it was once my fate to be, you will be better able to appreciate my feelings. At present your ideas of such a destiny are doubtless vague enough—your romantic notions would probably drape beggary in a tinsel petticoat and nourish it upon chickens' wings ; but I beg to assure you that it is fed and clad far otherwise ; and that I owe the privilege of having exchanged its rags and black bread for the comforts of existence, to a resolute will and an indomitable energy. Do not imagine, however, that I have forgotten to whom I was indebted for the chance of failure ; or that I will not repay the wrong. If I have been content to wait, it has been because mine was no weak and timid spirit likely to be scared by difficulties ; I

know with whom I have to deal ; I know that there is one method, and but one, of revenging the cruel injuries which have been heaped upon me. Could I have bowed the pride of my puling uncle or his arrogant wife by gold, I should have needed no co-adjutor, and your marriage with a pauper would have been a matter of indifference ; but it is not so ; and your alliance with this peer, scorn him as you may, is consequently an imperative necessity."

"Hear me in my turn, Sir ;" said his daughter with calm dignity ; "had you been poor, or even dishonoured, and that my self-abnegation, the sacrifice of my whole life, could have restored you to affluence or to honour, I would have placed my fate in your hands without a murmur, too happy to have been thus enabled to repay the debt I owe you ; but I will not consent to be made the victim of a chimera—the tool of a caprice.—From the moment when you first acquainted me with the intentions of Lord Downmere, I frankly told you that he was not merely in-

different, but positively disagreeable to me!"

"But you did not, in your boasted frankness, add that such was the case because you had seen fit to form another attachment," interposed Mr. Trevanion.

"I did not, because at that time I had come to no resolution on the subject; but even had I decided against Mr. Elphinstone, I should not assuredly have accepted the earl as a substitute; I declare, however, that I was then free, in so far as regarded any pledge or promise to another; for I was well aware, that the suit of Sydney could not be otherwise than unwelcome to yourself, while I was at the same time keenly alive to the apparent risk which I should incur by an union with a man my junior in age; nor was it until I had become conscious that my happiness depended upon this marriage that I could bring myself to incur your displeasure; and I entreat of you to believe that I did so ultimately with a reluctance and regret which have cost me many bitter tears."

“ You will have many still more bitter yet to shed, should you persist in your present insane purpose, Miss Trevanion ;” said her father ; “ for although you have been pleased to designate my legitimate desire to re-integrate myself in society as a ‘ chimera ’ and a ‘ caprice,’ I beg to assure you, that I will not be thwarted by a whim. Lord Downmere has, you say, left his cause in my hands and he has done well, for as your parent I have a right to enforce your obedience. I am aware that you calculate upon your *legal* power to set my wishes at defiance : I do not dispute it ; but you have forgotten to calculate upon the opinion of the world. Are you prepared to encounter its ridicule and its blame ? Are you strong enough to spurn its avoidance and its contempt ? you are no longer an ignorant and wilful girl, whose folly might be poetised into romance ; you have seen enough of society to know that its sympathies will not be enlisted on the side of a woman who has reached her six-and-twentieth

year, and who deliberately throws herself away upon a penniless boy."

"I care little for the opinion of the world, Sir;" said Ida, firmly; "I have, as you say, seen and judged it; and I know, and can fully appreciate, its hollowness. Were that the only difficulty with which I should be called upon to contend, I should not waste one thought upon the subject."

"But, as I need scarcely again inform you, it is by no means the only one;" coldly observed the merchant; "although I may be permitted to remark that even were it so, it is not to be dismissed so lightly. Hitherto you have, surrounded by affluence and adulation, found the world a warm and willing friend; you will, in a reverse of fortune, find it a keen and bitter enemy; and one which no woman can defy with impunity; and mark me when I tell you—for I do so advisedly—that you will have to make the trial."

"So be it then;" said Ida, sadly; "I can no longer hesitate. Had you sought

to detach me from Mr. Elphinstone by entreaty and affection, I might perchance have yielded—I know not—but it might have been so ; now, however, the die is cast, for I were unworthy the love of any honourable man if I could abandon him from mercenary motives. I understand the threat which you have held out—I am to be disinherited. If such be indeed your will, I must submit; I may feel the injustice of the sentence, but I cannot question your right of action.”

“ That is at least fortunate,” observed her father ironically.

“ Nor shall I suffer myself to be dismayed by the prospect ;” pursued Ida ; “ it is hard, no doubt, to wrestle single-handed with the world, but in such a strife even defeat is not altogether without honour ; our hands, heads, and hearts were bestowed upon us in order that we might be enabled to help ourselves ; and the honest struggle for independence has ever an ennobling effect, while the poor tame spirit that is content to remain a burthen upon

others at the expense of its best and worthiest feelings, rather than boldly to launch out into the ocean of life, and resolutely to buffet its billows, must necessarily, with its own loss of dignity, incur the contempt of all around it."

"Very eloquently put;" said Mr. Trevanion, still in the same accent of sarcasm; "but you must excuse me if I say that your well-rounded periods on this occasion remind me of a coarse daub set in a costly frame; it may be surrounded by glitter, but it remains as worthless as ever. However, you have explained your determination, and fully understand mine; we shall shortly see which is of the most avail, you either marry Lord Downmere, or you cease to be my daughter."

"Father—*dear* father!" exclaimed Ida imploringly.

"Do not exhaust your talents at the commencement of the tragedy, Miss Trevanion;" said the merchant; "I ask for deeds, not words; and if you decline to prove your affection, I beg of you not to express it. As

Countess of Downmere, you are my heiress—as Mrs. Elphinstone, you are without a home in my house.”

Ida rose ; her cheek was very pale, and there was a convulsive movement about her mouth, which betrayed the depth of her agony. She leant for an instant upon the table before her, as if unable to support herself, as she turned a long and appealing look upon her father ; but the eyes which met hers were cold and stony ; and after the lapse of a second, Mr. Trevanion with ceremonious politeness threw open the door of the library, and so soon as his daughter had crossed the threshold quietly closed it behind her.

CHAPTER XI.

MISS TREVANION TO MR. ELPHINSTONE.

“I PLEDGED myself to write to you, Sydney, and I redeem my promise. I assured you that I could be firm where our mutual happiness was at stake, and I almost begin to fear that I have been firm even to sin. Nor is this all—for while incurring the displeasure of my father, I have, I fear, rendered our union impossible. Be honest with me, Sydney, and above all be just to yourself; when I tell you that in becoming your wife I cease to be the daughter of Mr. Trevanion. I shall no longer be the petted and pampered heiress, but a disowned and disinherited child, whose

poverty can only tend to aggravate your own. I know my father well—such has been his declared decision; and I am well aware that even although in secret he may weep tears of blood, he will never rescind it. For myself I care not; for beggary as your wife would be a happier fate for me than the most fabulous affluence with another. Let not that consideration, however, have any weight with you; a woman's world is her home—her ambition does not travel beyond her own hearth; but with your sex it is far otherwise; and you Sydney, are still very young, too young to sacrifice all your hopes and prospects in life to an affection which—bear with me when I remind you of such a possibility—may one day fail. And even were it to endure through every trial and hardship, yet remember that home-cares and home-anxieties must cripple your exertions and weaken your energies. You were born for a brilliant destiny, and you deserve it. Renounce your claim to my hand; assert yourself, and do justice to

the noble talents that you possess. Do not suppose that I say this lightly. In liberating you, I desire no freedom for myself. If I never bear your name, neither will I accept that of any man on earth. My future happiness and pride shall consist in watching your career, in exulting over your success, in praying for your prosperity. Reflect seriously—for the crisis is an awful one to both of us—whether indeed the affection which you have vowed to me has not been unconsciously to yourself, deepened by the circumstances under which we have hitherto met. You saw me the spoiled child of fortune, whatever beauty I possess, heightened by dress, and perfected by art; whatever accomplishments I may have acquired, exerted amid scenes which lent to them a *prestige* not their own. You may have deceived yourself, and how fatal must such an error prove alike to yourself and me. Look beyond the present, Sydney; endeavour to realise that years have passed over us both—years of struggle. You

will still be in the full pride of manhood and of hope, competent to struggle with the world, still an object of admiration—a mark for that world's homage. But I, Sydney, what will those years have done for me? Already far before you in the race of life, I shall have reached the turning-point; and withered, changed—I cannot proceed, Sydney—but I can feel the rest! No, no; it must not be—look on the past as a dream; have the courage to awaken; and in after years I shall hear you thank me for your release.

“IDA.”

Calmly, and with a steady hand, Miss Trevanion sealed and closed her letter, but her fingers were as cold and bloodless as marble; and although her eyes were tearless they were dilated, and the transparent lids hot and discoloured, as though the drops which should have fallen had burnt and blistered there. For a time she sat thrown back upon her chair, with her gaze fastened upon the fateful missive. It

contained indeed the destiny of her future life, and she dared not ask herself how it would be answered.

After a while she raised her head, and looked languidly about her; luxury surrounded her on every side: her glance travelled from silken hangings to gorgeous mirrors—from costly toys to jewelled cabinets and flowers, and birds, and books, and all the other appliances of wealth and taste with which her hitherto indulgent father had delighted to environ her; and as she noted each in its turn, an expression of loathing passed over her countenance. It was for vanities such as these, that she had been urged to barter away her self respect—to sell her liberty—to perjure her faith—to crush her heart; and it was from the fear of losing these that she had voluntarily offered to resign Sydney Elphinstone. But no, no; not from this fear for herself, but for him—and could it be that he would prize them so dearly as to accept her self-abnegation in order to secure them? Did

she not wrong him by suspicion? And yet who should say? And then once more arose the fatal thought—"He is so young—the world and all its gauds are still so bright for him. Let him but look into the future, as I have urged, and then—" she did not pursue the anticipation further, but with a convulsive shudder that shook her whole frame, she clasped her spread hands on the table, near which she sat, and buried her throbbing brow in their open palms.

How long she had continued thus motionless in her misery she knew not, when she was aroused by a gentle knocking at the door of her room, which slowly opened, and Lady Mary Brooklands entered, and closed it behind her.

"My dear Ida;" said her visitor as she tenderly approached her, and took a seat by her side; what is the meaning of this terrible emotion? What has happened?

"Oh, my kind friend, I am very, very, wretched;" was the faint reply, as one large scalding tear rolled down the fever-crimsoned

cheek of the unhappy girl; "I have just gone through a scene with my father which has nearly destroyed me."

"*Just* gone through such a scene, my sweet child;" exclaimed the noble widow; "you have surely had time to compose yourself since the interview took place, for I have myself been closetted with Mr. Trevanion in the library for the last two hours."

"But he has surely not expressed any displeasure towards you?" said Ida, anxiously; "whatever cause of complaint he may have against myself, you, at least, are guiltless in this affair."

"No, no; apprehend nothing on my account;" replied her friend with proud composure; "Mr. Trevanion is a man of the world, and has sufficient regard for my rank, whatever may be his feelings towards myself personally, to avoid any undue exhibition of temper in our intercourse. On the contrary, throughout the whole of the interview to which I have alluded, nothing could exceed his

suavity ; and although I detected a certain coldness in his manner which betrayed a suspicion that I felt to be totally undeserved on my part, I refrained from any observation which might tend to shew him that I was conscious of the change, feeling that situated as I am in this family, my rôle should universally be that of a mediator ; and as such you are aware that I have universally striven to act."

"I am indeed, well aware of it, dear Lady Mary ;" said Miss Trevanion, affectionately ; "but as my father appeared to think that you had favoured the addresses of Sydney, and refused to receive my assurance to the contrary, I feared that he might have expressed the same suspicion to yourself."

"That he does so believe, I am convinced ;" was the quiet rejoinder ; "but as I felt that such was not the case, I would not afford him the triumph of perceiving that I considered the suspicion to be possible ; for had I done so I could not of course have remained under his

roof; and the rather, as you know how utterly unjust it would have been, since I had never been admitted to your confidence—that my advice had never been sought, and that I was, of course completely ignorant of the engagement between yourself and my nephew.”

“It is true that I did not solicit your advice;” said Miss Trevannion; “because I felt that had I done so I should have rendered your position one of difficulty and delicacy from your relationship to Mr. Elphinstone, although I could not doubt that you must have perceived our mutual attachment.”

“By no means, my dear girl, by no means;” was the ready disclaimer of the lady; “I have now for many years been so accustomed to see you an object of admiration to all by whom you have been approached, that I considered Sydney only as an additional mote sporting in the sunshire of your smiles, or you may rest assured that I should have warned you of the impolicy of such an attachment. It is true that the poor boy is handsome and

intellectual, as well as high-born ; and, I really believe, truly amiable and honourable ; but still he *is* poor, and I therefore imagined it impossible that with all your advantages you would ever dream of making such a sacrifice."

"Surely, dear Lady Mary, you at least should have known me better than to suppose that I could marry for mere wealth or rank."

"Forgive me, Ida, if I have so far done you injustice ;" was the fond reply of her visitor, as she passed her arm round the waist of Miss Trevanion, and drew her gently to her bosom ; "but you must remember that I was fully aware of your father's views and wishes ; that I knew him to be absolute in his family ; and that from the nature of your education, and your great success in the world, I had every reason to anticipate that you would become the wife of a man of decided rank. How then do you conceive it probable that I should even for a moment dream of your bestowing yourself upon poor Sydney. Why, my sweet child, much as I am compelled to admire your beau-

tiful disinterestedness, I can even now scarcely bring myself to credit the fact."

"But tell me, my dear friend," said her listener, involuntarily soothed by the placid kindness of her manner; "had I ventured to confide the truth to you, should you have blamed me for my love of Sydney?"

"Blamed you, darling? No, I should not certainly have had the heart to blame your unselfish generosity; but still I should have felt it my duty to discourage the attachment as one which could not fail to excite the displeasure of your father, who had, as you must yourself admit, every right to be ambitious for such a daughter; and even now my errand is to dissuade you from persisting in this unpropitious engagement."

"At my father's request?" asked Ida.

"Yes, love, at Mr. Trevanion's request, who appears to place great faith in my influence, far greater than I fear it deserves. He has strenuously urged me to exert all my eloquence in pointing out what he considers as the mad-

ness and folly of such a marriage, and you see that I am conscientiously doing so. He moreover requested me to represent the policy and propriety of your union with Lord Downmere; and it must be confessed, Ida, that, in a worldly point of view, there can be no comparison between the two."

"Is Lord Downmere the husband you would have selected for me, Lady Mary?"

"Perhaps not, dearest, perhaps not precisely; but he is, you know, as a peer of the realm and a man of enormous wealth, a very desirable match. There can be no doubt that you can do much worse."

"I scarcely think it possible;" said Miss Trevanion, with a shade of haughtiness; "that is, however, a point which we need not discuss, as it is one upon which my mind is unalterably decided. Happen what may, I will never become Countess of Downmere; I should despise myself, could I be mercenary enough to barter my happiness for such considerations to such a man."

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“Well, my love, you know best, of course ; while it is quite certain, that if you have really resolved to give your hand to my nephew—if you really feel that he possesses your affections—we can only hope that Mr. Trevanion will, after a time, become reconciled to the marriage.—Still I must, as I have promised, caution you that all your friends will regard it as an imprudence. But if you feel that your happiness depends on him, I actually have not the courage to distress you by any further arguments. Indeed, under the peculiar circumstances, I almost feel it a treason against Sydney to say another word upon the subject ; for I cannot forget that he is my sister’s son, and that he is, moreover, a man of whose alliance any father might be proud. However, I must not suffer the affections of a relative to seduce me into a failure against friendship, and I am anxious to be able to assure Mr. Trevanion that I have performed my onerous mission faithfully.”

“Of any after-reconciliation with my father,

when I have once become the wife of Sydney ; I am utterly hopeless ;" said Ida, sadly ; " I know that once to have incurred his anger and thwarted his will, is to have forfeited his affection for ever. No, he will never forgive me."

" Nonsense, silly child ;" exclaimed Lady Mary Brooklands laughingly ; " Do you forget that your father is a wealthy man, and that you are his only child, and must consequently one day inherit that wealth ? Do you suppose that after having throughout life exerted all his energies to make his daughter a mark for the admiration and envy of the world, he will long permit his affections to be alienated from the idol which he has himself set up ? No, no ; trust me, he will desire to see his ample fortune produce its legitimate effect, and for that purpose, if for no other, you are certain of forgiveness."

" I cannot entertain any such hope, my good friend ;" sighed Miss Trevanion ; " I do not seek to do so for a moment, as I feel convinced that ultimate disappointment must ensue. My

father, with all his noble qualities, never forgives—he is truth itself—and he has assured me that in the event of my disobedience, he will bequeath every shilling of which he is possessed to the son of Sir Jasper.”

Her companion visibly started. “You know him well, my dear Lady Mary ;” she pursued ; “and therefore you will readily understand that he will fulfil his word ; while I do not hesitate to confess that bitterly as I feel, and ever shall feel, his displeasure and his estrangement, the thought that instead, as I had fondly hoped, of enriching Sydney, and of affording him the opportunity of displaying his brilliant talents with the effect that they deserve, I shall go to him helpless and almost penniless, and thus increase his struggle with the world, is yet more painful.”

Lady Mary remained silent for a moment, and then said in a constrained tone, very different from that in which she had hitherto carried on the conversation. “I can well believe it, my dear, for in the present factitious state of

society, it is impossible for any individual to do justice to himself, however highly gifted he may be by nature, unless he has the means of improving his advantages. I do not for a moment suspect Sydney of any mercenary views; indeed I believe him to be incapable of such considerations, particularly when *you* are the object of his affections; but still the imprudence of undertaking the responsibility of a family under such circumstances will, undoubtedly be very great; nor, my love, must you be hurt if I venture to remind you that this imprudence will be considerably increased by the disparity of age which exists between you. You will, as I before urged upon you, really do well to reflect before you decide; as these particulars may not have struck you before, I considered it my imperative duty to point them out."

"Pardon me, Madam;" said Miss Trevanion, haughtily, as she rose with a flushed cheek and a flashing eye. "I am not the heartless egotist you think me. I have considered all

and more of the difficulties which a marriage with me might entail upon Mr. Elphinstone than even you have enumerated. Nor have I simply grieved over them in selfish sorrow ; there—" and as she spoke she pointed towards the letter which still lay upon her desk ; " there, I have forced them upon the attention of your nephew himself—there, I have urged him to consider them as insurmountable, and to resign his claim upon my hand. If I am fated to a life of suffering, I am at least willing to suffer alone."

" You are warm, Ida !"

" Perhaps so ;" said Miss Trevanion, as she sank back into her seat ; " but you must pardon me—it is hard, very hard, to be abandoned by all in whom you have trusted ; but I thank you, Lady Mary, for having kept me no longer in suspense as to the support I might expect from your affection. You have indeed complied even to the very letter with the request of my father—your mission has been fulfilled as conscientiously as you could

desire; and now I have but one request to make of you, and I make it unhesitatingly, as it cannot by any possibility involve your interests. Should Mr. Elphinstone, your nephew, after having received that letter, persevere in seeking the disinherited daughter of Mr. Trevanion as his wife, it is more than possible that Lady Mary Brooklands, may be solicited still to remain his guest, and to do the honours of his house—and oh! if indeed it should be so;” she added, as her voice sank and her lip quivered; “be kind to my poor mother, I shall not be there to support her weakness, and to conceal from her the isolation of her neglected and wasted existence—and believe me that, careless as he may appear of her happiness, my father will in his heart, thank you for the care of her.”

“Miss Trevanion, I do not understand you,” faltered Lady Mary.

“No—you are right, you do not understand me;” was the reply; “but you may one day do so: meanwhile, this interview has ceased

to be pleasant to either party, and I will not detain you longer.'

"Ida, your impetuous feelings will be your ruin," said her companion harshly.

"It may be so," murmured the unhappy girl, despondently; "it may be so: at present I am only the victim of the passions of others."

"What am I to say to your father, Miss Trevanion?" asked Lady Mary, as she rose to depart.

"Tell him all that has passed between us;" was the indignant rejoinder; "I have no cause to shrink from one word that I have uttered, I have no intention to retract it."

And so they parted.

CHAPTER XII.

DOUBTS AND FEARS.

Miss Trevanion was now, indeed, as she had said, alone. To her mother she knew that it was vain 'to cling for counsel or support, for the poor lady had been so long self-centred, and crushed beneath the iron hand of her husband, that her heart was dead to sympathy, and engrossed by its own petty feelings of discontent. The marriage from which she had anticipated alike honour and happiness had been a mere gilded slavery, and she had worn her chains with a passiveness which had gradually but surely benumbed all the most generous qualities of

her nature, and so broken her spirits that the only enjoyment of which she was still susceptible was that of perfect quiet ; every event that tended to interrupt it being regarded as a personal and wilful injury. Weak, as we have already shown, both intellectually and morally, a neglected if not vicious education had caused her greatly to overrate mere worldly advantages ; a meanness of mind which had been fostered in after-life by the puerile course of novel-reading in which she delighted ; and although it is probable that had she been permitted to perform the part of a mother to her child, and to exercise the privileges of the maternal character, that sacred tie might have awakened her to holier and higher feelings, the fact of her having seen her legitimate duties delegated to another, had caused her to regard her daughter rather as the heiress of Mr. Trevanion, than as one upon whose love she had a claim, and whose happiness she was bound to promote. Awed by the rank of Lady Mary

Brooklands, it never occurred to her on the first domestication of the titled stranger beneath her roof, to contest her own right, or to assert her own dignity; while as Ida passed from infancy to girlhood she had looked with bewildered surprise upon the bright and beautiful being whose talents were the theme of every tongue.

Even the affection which was lavished upon her by the brilliant girl, who never for an instant suffered the indulgence of which she was the object to induce her to fail in respect or assiduity to her neglected mother, could not lessen the estrangement. Mrs. Trevanion was vaguely conscious of their utter incompatibility of mind and feeling; and thus by slow but inevitable degrees, a barrier had grown up between them which neither could ultimately overpass. In her secret heart the childish and vapid woman felt herself wronged by the superior qualities of her own child; and consequently met all her advances with querulous discontent, if not with actual distaste; yet

still her daughter, with the persistence of a generous nature, even while she was compelled to admit to herself that she had little respect for her mother's judgment or understanding, continued to act as though she possessed the firmest faith in both.

In such a crisis as the present, however, Miss Trevanion at once felt that it would be idle to make any appeal to her; for even as she had herself become the wife of Mr. Trevanion in the weak hope of attaining to a rank in society superior to that in which she was born, so was she comparatively angered and annoyed by the refusal of her daughter to accomplish a marriage which would have made her the mother-in-law of an earl. Like her husband himself, but from a far different motive, she cared little what might be the qualifications of the individual through whose agency this desirable object was to be effected; she merely fastened upon the fact of its possibility, nor could she control her irritation at what she denounced as the obstinacy of Ida,

when, to her extreme amazement, she learned that not even the commands of her father could induce her to accept the hand of a peer of the realm.

"It is really too bad, Lady Mary," she said, peevishly; "a great deal too bad, and using me extremely ill, when she knows how much I wish it. What can she possibly want, I wonder! I'm sure if Mr. Trevanion is satisfied she has no right to look higher."

"I quite agree with you in that opinion, Madam;" replied the titled dowager with a quiet sneer; "there can be no doubt that even Miss Trevanion should be satisfied with the rank of the Earl of Downmere; that is not, of course, her objection."

"Then what can it possibly be?" asked the lady vacantly.

"I should presume that it is to Lord Downmere himself?"

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Mrs. Trevanion with more energy than she had exhibited for years; "I see nothing objectionable in

him, and even if they were, what can it signify?"

Her companion shrugged her shoulders, and remained silent.

"I am sure," pursued the mortified mother with unusual garrulity; "that I was not at all in love with Mr. Trevanion when I married him; for, to tell you the truth, he always frightened me, he was so cold and proud; but when he told me of his uncle Sir Jasper, and Trevanion Hall, and his poor dear mother, who was, like yourself, an earl's daughter, I felt at once that I was never likely to do better; and so, you see, I consented to be his wife."

"A resolution, Madam, which I trust that you have never had reason to repent," was the sarcastic rejoinder.

"Well, I don't know exactly; I am not quite certain;" said the poor lady musingly; "I sometimes fancy, and particularly since I have become convinced that Mr. Trevanion's great relations are never likely to be reconciled

to him that we were not altogether suited to each other; and that I might perhaps have been happier had I married John George Harris, my father's head-clerk, who nearly went out of his mind when he found that I had engaged myself to 'the Don,' as they called my present husband in the office."

"It is possible," said Lady Mary; "that some similar idea may have struck your daughter, and that she may have acted upon it."

"If I thought so—" commenced Mrs. Trevanion; then suddenly checking herself, and turning towards her companion, she added with what she evidently intended to be an accent of severity; "at all events, Lady Mary, I believe she has more good sense than to think in earnest of throwing herself away upon your nephew."

No; Miss Trevanion was right; she could anticipate neither counsel nor comfort in her trial from such a mother.

Thus then there was but one individual to

whom she had looked for sympathy and support, and that one was Lady Mary Brooklands; the near relative of the man on whom she had consented to bestow her hand; the attached friend who had been the guardian of her girlhood and the companion of her riper years; by whom her attachment had been, if not openly applauded, at least covertly encouraged, and even this last stay had failed her at the very moment when she had placed the firmest faith in its stability—failed her because what her haughty and calculating ladyship had coveted for her nephew was, not the heart of the loving girl who had for years clung to her as to a second mother, but the hand of Mr. Trevanion's heiress.

This was a bitter conviction, and as it grew upon her, a stronger feeling of desolation crept over the affrighted Ida; "*He* too," she murmured to herself; "he too, will now perhaps become suddenly aware of the imprudence which he was lately so anxious to commit—he may discover in our disparity of age, which

he has hitherto treated so lightly, an obstacle and a ridicule. I am prepared for everything; deserted on all sides, I must learn to suffice to myself, and I will do so. They may destroy my happiness, but they shall not bow my pride. My heart may break—it must—but I will ask no pity; I will submit to none. I am no weak girl to be a mark for the whispers of the idle; my father's spirit of endurance is strong within me; and like the Spartan boy I shall know how to hug my agony without a groan. And yet how I had garnered up my heart in him—how madly I had loved him, and love him still; the better, perhaps, that I thought he would owe all to me. It cannot be that Sydney will prove hollow and heartless like his worldly aunt; but should it indeed be so, better now than after I had become his wife, for now I would struggle to forgive; while then—” and she paused and grasped her burning brow so tightly that it grew pale beneath the pressure, “then I should have scorned to make the effort; never would I have forgiven

him had he pleaded to me upon his knees. And it might have been so—yes, yes, it might have been so; in some ten short years, and how quietly would those ten years pass, my boasted beauty will be on the wane, and the world will be full of young and blooming faces, fair and fresh, with the first light of life bright upon them—and how then? Would he—he, still in the unfaded glory of his manhood remain true to me? true to herself? I dare not doubt it—for his sake—I dare not for my own. Now I am wretched, but not guilty—but then—then what would not his falsehood make me? Lady Mary is right. I have forgotten my own sense of dignity—I have been the victim of my own vanity—he will do well to rebuke my folly by submitting to her judgment, by following her counsels. I shall at least be spared the pang of his neglect, and the bitterness of his contempt!”

Worn with excitement, and crushed by mortification and anxiety, the painful picture which the jealous imagination of the excited

girl had conjured up, overcame her little remaining strength ; and when her French maid entered her room an hour subsequently, she found her stretched upon a sofa, cold and insensible ; nor was it until after a considerable time, and the application of all the restoratives within reach that she slowly recovered her consciousness.

As she did so, the first object upon which her eyes fastened was a letter, and the *femme-de-chambre* no sooner perceived that it had attracted her attention than she placed it in her hand. Mademoiselle Seraphine was enchanted. In one instant she had composed a most touching romance. Her haughty mistress must now confide in her ; and her little black eyes would twinkle in spite of herself as she decided that her assistance must at last be needed, and her talents recognized. Eagerly did she watch the effect of her ready zeal ; but her hopes were destined to disappointment ; the letter was no sooner in the possession of Miss Trevanion than one glance suf-

ficed ; it was the handwriting of Sydney ; and faintly murmuring " Leave me," the agitated girl closed her eyes and fell back upon the cushions, with the fateful packet tightly grasped within her rigid fingers. For awhile she remained motionless, not a sob, not a sigh escaped her, but her heart laboured painfully, and her pulses throbbed with an excitement strangely compounded of hope and dread. Her destiny lay hidden within the narrow folds of the paper that she held, and she had not courage to learn its secret. But suddenly she started from her recumbent position, shook back the masses of her dark hair, and with febrile energy tore open the seal.

Thus ran the letter :—

" I know not, Ida, whether to be pained or rejoiced at the tone of the note which I have just received from you ; for while much of its contents is calculated to cut me to the heart, it also contains much which has made me supremely happy. That you should have been subjected to so severe a trial of your feelings

is to me a source of wretchedness greater than even you can comprehend ; but you must not blame me if I confess that the conviction, that you willingly endured it for my sake, has almost made me selfish enough to forget at times how dearly my own triumph has been purchased. Mine is no common love, Ida ; it has become part and parcel of my existence. I feel that I cannot live without you, and that with you I could brave every trial which the tyranny of the world could heap upon me. You say that should you persist in fulfilling your promise to become my wife you lose all claim to the affection and inheritance of your father—proudly then shall I feel that you will owe all to me—that we shall be everything to each other. This, dearest, is my idea of happiness ; I am young alike in years and hope ; my energies are strong, and with you beside me to cheer me in my labour, and to rejoice in my success, I cannot fail. I will *not* resign my claim to possess you ; you have promised, and you must perform. And yet, may I not, in my

miserable egotism, be condemning you to sacrifices so great that even my tenderness cannot requite them? Oh, if it indeed be so, let me not drag you down from the proud eminence on which you stand, only to ensure my own happiness. Like you, I will strive to be generous—to exult in your prosperity, in your success—I know not if I shall have strength to do so, but I will try, even though my heart burst in the effort. Care not for me, however, if on mature reflection, you find that you shrink from the contrast, between what is and what must be, when you can no longer command the luxuries by which you are now surrounded—If you doubt that my love and devotion—a love and a devotion which can end only in the grave—will not suffice to replace them. I cannot now offer you affluence—I may not be enabled to do so for years to come—Can you forego it for my sake? If so, trust me that it will come at last. Labouring with you, and for you, I shall compel success—you will be my life, my light, and my reward. I make no

comment upon the fears which you express that time can weaken my affections ; it is true that when we first met, it was your wondrous beauty by which I was thrall'd, and that beauty will live unchanged in my heart for ever ; while all your nobler and better qualities will only tend, as years pass on, to render you still dearer. Should we part, therefore, Ida, the ruin of our hopes will be your work ; for never, never will I willingly resign the claim which you have given me upon your hand. I may be unworthy of such a boon in the eyes of those around you, but am I so in yours ? It is for you, and you alone, to decide my destiny. I urge you now as I should not have dared to do, had you still been enabled to become mine, rich in the world's gifts ; for then indeed my earnestness might have been misinterpreted ; but now, when you assure me that it is not so, I may freely own that life itself will be a burthen when you are lost to me. I have never loved another ; and now my heart is so filled with your

image that it can never admit a new one. Let your beauty wane ; to me you will be ever beautiful beyond all on this earth ; let sickness wither you, I will render that suffering light by my tenderness and devotion ; and if sorrow should reach you even in my arms, I will only clasp you the closer that its bitter pressure may not be felt. Ida, noblest, best of women, torture me no longer, tell me only that you are still mine—mine for time—mine for eternity.

“SYDNEY.”

“ Yes, my brave-hearted Sydney, yes”—exclaimed Miss Trevanion, vehemently throwing herself upon her knees ; “ yours, and only yours—yours for time—yours for eternity. I cannot, and I will not doubt you. Years will not change you ; poverty will not chill you. You will love me to the end. What are the gaud and glitter of the world beside the possession of such a heart as yours ? And I have dared to wrong your noble nature—to believe that the cold reasonings of the selfish and

false could shake your stedfast faith. Shame on my sordid spirit ! But I can never doubt you more. I will be worthy of your affection by the trustfulness with which I will repose upon its truth and strength. Oh, I am happy—happy—even as the mariner who in his storm-tost vessel sees a safe harbour near, and knows that after one more fierce struggle, he shall gain the wished-for haven of peace and rest.”

When Miss Trevanion rose from her knees; she was no longer pale from exhaustion, and subdued by the long-sustained anxiety which had so lately crushed her ; there was a proud light in her eye, and a firmness in her tread, which betrayed her inward exultation. The anger of her father, the treachery of her friend, all was forgotten in that moment of triumphant happiness. Sydney was true—Sydney was all, and more than she had dared to hope—and she had no room for any other memory. Again and again she read the letter which she still held tightly clasped, and again and again the

smile of the heart's gladness played upon her lip. She drew aside the window-drapery, and threw back the sash, as if to breathe more freely, to have more scope for her joy, more space for her intense and thrilling rapture; and never had she thought the sky so glorious in its blue and tranquil beauty, the trees so graceful in their waving greenery, the flowers so rich in colour and in perfume. "Of these, at least, even poverty cannot deprive us;" she murmured to herself; "we shall need no gold to purchase these. Nature is no niggard of her gifts, and she will not withhold her treasures from the hearts by which she is worshipped. The future cannot extort a sigh from me now, nor will I even shrink from the present."

True to this resolution, Miss Trevanion summoned her maid, and calmly devoted herself to the duties of her toilette: every vestige of emotion had faded from her features, and a soft serenity had succeeded the storm of passion to which she had so lately yielded; ex-

treme in all her feelings, she now dwelt only upon the happiness which was, as she fondly believed, so soon to repay her for all the suffering of the past ; and as she rejected one after the other the ornaments with which her zealous *femme-de-chambre* was anxious to adorn her according to her usual custom, and placed in her luxuriant hair, and in the girdle of her simple dress of snowy muslin, a few natural flowers from a vase which stood upon her dressing-table, she smiled exultingly as she became aware that Sydney could scarcely consider her less lovely thus, than when covered with the costly gems with which she must henceforth dispense.

The astonished French woman looked on in silence. That her beautiful young mistress, who, she had every reason to believe, was betrothed to an Earl, should suddenly so far forget her dignity as to throw aside her jewels for a handful of paltry flowers, was to her mysterious and annoying in the extreme. What could it mean? And the pale face,

which had so terrified her only a few hours previously, and which was now beaming with a quiet joy—that was another problem. Mademoiselle Seraphine was convinced that there was a secret somewhere; and never before had she felt so indignant at the proud reserve which led Miss Trevanion habitually to avoid all unnecessary intercourse with her attendants. The smart *soubrette* would have willingly given a year's wages, which would have been no slight sacrifice, could she have dived into the depths of the heart which was beating so tranquilly beside her, but she dared not ask a question; and consequently she flitted and fluttered about the apartment with the indignant air of a grievously-offended person, occasionally murmuring beneath her breath certain doubts as to how far '*Milord*' might approve of the sudden '*caprice*' of his incomprehensible '*fiancée*'—wondering how long this fit of '*coquetterie maladroite et mal entendue*' was to last; and enquiring of herself whether she ought to condescend to live with a mistress

who appeared to be steeped in grief one hour, and as happy as a child the next—who preferred rose-buds to rubies, and, worse than all, kept her own secrets.

Upon the object of her speculations, however, all this display of irritation was wholly wasted; Ida was living that inner life which deadens the perceptions to outward things, and she finally dismissed Mademoiselle without the least regard for her injured feelings, in order that she might enjoy in solitude the thickcoming thoughts which crowded upon her heart and brain, and without one suspicion that had not the ill-used woman anticipated a *nôce*, and the glory of arranging the bridal coronal of *Madame la Comtesse*, she would, in the exasperation of the moment, have given her warning on the spot.

CHAPTER XIII.

A FAMILY FRIEND.

While Miss Trevanion was occupied with her new and pleasant visions, her father was moodily pacing the library where he was closetted with the family friend; who, although she had told the tale of Ida's resolute rejection of the Earl, and her equally determined adherence to Mr. Elphinstone, in her smoothest and blandest manner, had nevertheless raised a storm in the breast of her host which it required all his self-control to combat. The placid smile and studied phrases of Lady Mary jarred upon his nerves, contrasting as they did with the irritation of his own feelings; and as

she sat playing with a paper-cutter as calmly as though no subject of importance occupied her thoughts, he inwardly cursed the high-breeding which had hitherto been the theme of his admiration.

“I believe that nothing would ruffle her ;” he murmured to himself; “nothing, so long as she was secure of a home under my roof; and I believe too that this affair has been her own work; and that, in spite of Ida’s denial, she forced her beggarly nephew upon the girl for the very purpose that she has accomplished. No, no, my Lady Mary, I am not your dupe, as you imagine; I see through the whole plot; but I will circumvent you yet. I will not be fooled with impunity. I will compel you to act for me, and with me, although as yet you have declined to express your own sentiments upon the subject. But I must be calm; and I will.”

And in pursuance of this resolution Mr. Trevanion re-seated himself, and smoothed his ruffled brow.

“Ida assures me, Lady Mary;” he commenced abruptly; “that you were altogether ignorant of the imprudent engagement into which she has entered with Mr. Elphinstone. Is this really the case?”

“It is.”

“But may I ask if it was quite unexpected on your part?”

“Perfectly so; the age of my nephew, and the narrowness of his means, alike rendered it impossible that I could indulge in any idea of the sort.”

“And no wonder, Madam, coupled as these circumstances were, moreover, by your knowledge of my views and intentions for Miss Trevanion,—whom,—I now tell you, as I have done frequently before,—I would rather follow to her grave than permit to throw herself away upon a nobody.”

“I must be permitted to remark,” observed the lady with a stateliness of manner intended to reprove the arrogance of her companion, “that Mr. Elphinstone is at once highly born

and well-connected. The equal at least in that respect, even of Miss Trevanion."

A dark cloud gathered on the countenance of the merchant.

"I do not deny it, Madam;" he said coldly; "as your relative the gentleman has assuredly that qualification, but still I must be pardoned if I persist in considering him as a nobody. He has no stake in the country. He has even a reputation to make; he is known only by a certain set as 'a man about town,' well-looking and well-dressed; and so obscure an individual can never be the husband of my daughter."

Lady Mary replied only by a listless bow, and having been engaged for the last few minutes in cutting some coloured paper into narrow strips, she now began to amuse herself by twisting them into spills.

Nothing could be more aggravating to a proud and impetuous nature like that of Mr. Trevanion, than this assumption of perfect composure. His blood rose to fever-heat, and his temples throbbed almost to pain.

"I trust, Madam;" he said after a moment's silence; "that you did me the favour to explain to my rebellious child that I peremptorily insisted upon her accepting the hand of Lord Downmere?"

"I did, with the same frankness that I communicated to yourself, her equally peremptory refusal."

"And do you not yourself—now, Lady Mary, I put the question to you in the full conviction that you will answer it frankly and undisguisedly, even although you chance to be the kinswoman of Mr. Elphinstone,—do you not, as a woman of the world, consider that her marriage with that gentleman, would be to the last degree imprudent?"

"Since you compel me to declare my opinion, Mr. Trevanion," said the noble matron, "I most assuredly do."

"I am happy to hear it, very happy;" exclaimed the merchant; "and may I hope that you expressed as much to my daughter?"

"I did."

"My dear Madam;" said Mr. Trevanion, earnestly; "I regret to say that I have wronged you by supposing that you had at least encouraged Ida's infatuation by your silence; I should have known you better than to suspect, even for a moment, that you could be guilty of such monstrous disingenuousness; but if you now, with your usual admirable judgment, disapprove of my daughter's folly, what will be your opinion when I confide to you that I have positively assured her, that, in the event of her persistence, not one shilling of my property shall ever be hers."

"What *can* I think, my dear Sir," smiled the lady; "but that you held forth a threat, which you would never have the courage to realise."

"You mistake me;" was the stern rejoinder; "I shall fulfil it without an effort."

The strip of pink paper upon which Lady Mary Brooklands was at that instant engaged, visibly quivered in her fingers; "Remember;"

she said, in a somewhat unsteady tone ; “ that Ida is your only child.”

“ I do ;” ~~replied~~ the merchant ; “ but I remember ~~also that~~ I have a nephew ; one moreover who bears my name, and will be no obscure recipient of my bounty. If I cannot humble Sir Jasper, in the way which I had every right to hope that I should have done, I can still, at least, effect my purpose by crushing him beneath the weight of an obligation which he can never cancel.”

“ Still, my good friend ;” urged the lady, discontinuing her employment, and evincing infinitely more interest in the conversation than she had hitherto done ; “ still I would plead for Ida. Recollect the nature of her education, and how little it has fitted her for a life of privation and struggle. Do not overlook the fact that she has done more than justice to your expectations ; that her beauty, her grace, and her attainments have made her universally popular, and caused her society to be courted by persons of exalted rank and acknowledged

judgment. In short, do not suffer your own—I confess, very legitimate—disappointment, to render you ungenerous or unjust.”

“Miss Trevanion has seen fit to emancipate herself from my authority, Madam;” was the dogged reply; “and I most sincerely congratulate her on the fact that her godmother bequeathed to her the magnificent sum of three hundred pounds a-year, as she will, should she become Mrs. Elphinstone, have an admirable opportunity of testing the capabilities of such an income; while I equally congratulate myself upon the circumstance, as I could not conscientiously have left her to starve.”

“Mr. Trevanion;” persisted the lady; “do nothing rashly, lest you incur the misery of your own reproaches.”

“I will run the risk of any remorse likely to be awakened by my assertion of self-respect, Madam.”

“But the world, Sir—you would surely not desire to brave the comments of the world;”

and believe me when I assure you, that public opinion will condemn so unprecedented an act of severity."

"I will venture even that;" said the merchant; "when once the dream of my life is past, the world and myself will have little in common. I ask nothing of it; I owe nothing to it; I have been the architect of my own fortunes, and the edifice that I have raised is substantial enough for me to trust to its stability."

"Consider, nevertheless;" resumed his companion, as she laid her jewelled hand lightly upon his arm, and looked pleadingly into his face; "do not, I entreat, suffer it to escape you, that by renouncing the interests, and—if I understand you rightly—the society of your daughter, you also tear asunder the holy bonds which knit together a mother and her child.—No, no; you cannot have the heart to do this."

"You are an able advocate, Lady Mary;" was the rejoinder, as a questionable smile played

about the mouth of Mr. Trevanion ; “ but unfortunately for the success of your argument, we are both sufficiently conversant with the *dessous des cartes* to be quite aware that the bonds to which you allude hang somewhat loosely in this instance. The mother will easily console herself with a new shawl and a new novel ; while the daughter, whose temperament and training must years ago have taught her that the lady in question is merely a harmless simpleton, to whom she is indebted for nothing beyond the single fact of her existence, will find little difficulty in reconciling herself to the privation of a very negative advantage. These are, however, idle speculations, as I still hope—and moreover, expect—to see Miss Trevanion Countess of Downmere.”

“ I sincerely trust, should the resolution which you have declared be really unalterable, that your expectations may be realised ; ” said Lady Mary, as she once more busied herself with the shreds of pink paper ; “ for I

shall be truly gratified on vacating my place at your hospitable hearth, to feel that you have not been disappointed in your hopes."

"I do not understand you, my dear Madam;" said the merchant.

"And yet nothing can be more simple than my meaning;" replied his companion, with a sigh that was only just audible enough to imply that she had failed in her effort to suppress it. "Let my sweet friend bestow her hand upon whom she may, my mission in your family is necessarily at an end; and although I shall, as you must be well aware, deeply and keenly feel my separation from a circle endeared to me alike by sympathy and habit, still ——"

"And do you really mean me to infer, my dear Lady Mary;" asked the merchant earnestly; "that you contemplate such a separation? and that because my daughter, in the natural course of events, leaves her home, you will also abandon the roof which you have so kindly regarded as your own?"

"In my turn I ask, can you be serious, Mr. Trevanion?"

"Perfectly so," was the calm reply; "you know precisely, my dear Madam, how I am situated; and that after the departure of Ida, be it to Woodlyn Castle or to a suburban lodging, there will be no longer a mistress of my house, should you indeed fail me? Nay, don't talk to me of Mrs. Trevanion: she exists, and nothing more. To you alone can I look for companionship and help; and I trust that our long friendship gives me some claim upon your consideration."

"My position, under such circumstances, would be an onerous one;" remarked the lady.

"Pardon me if I cannot see it in that light. You have now been my guest, my honoured guest, for years; the tie between us has become stronger than that of kindred; I must induce you to rescind your resolution."

Lady Mary was an excellent actress, and on this occasion she put forth all her talent. Although the idea of leaving the luxurious home

of which she had for so long a period been the actual if not the nominal mistress, had caused her many an unquiet moment, she was by no means inclined to avow the truth, when by gratifying the secret wish of her own heart she might seem to concede a favour ; and she consequently adduced a multitude of arguments against the proposed arrangement, although none of them were powerful enough to defy refutation ; and even while she was eager to yield, and thus to secure to herself the advantages she had so long enjoyed, she refused to pledge herself to anything ; there was so much to consider ; circumstances might arise to render her determination imperative ; she was, of course, both gratified and flattered by so unequivocal a proof of regard on the part of Mr. Trevanion, but the point was a delicate one, a very delicate one. She would not, however, positively refuse, because there was nothing on earth which she should regret so much as to wound the feelings of so old and esteemed a friend ; but at the same time she

must request to be allowed the opportunity of turning the matter over in her mind. Nothing could be more reasonable; and as her companion entertained a shrewd doubt of her ultimately proving inexorable, he instantly complied with the very natural suggestion. He did not seek to be importunate, although he should await her decision with anxiety; and thus the question was left in abeyance for the time. Mr. Trevanion readily perceived, however, that it had been mooted at an auspicious moment, for a quarter of an hour had not elapsed before he discovered that the certainty of her own impunity in any and every case had singularly tended to modify the noble matron's sentiments on the subject of his contemplated severity to his daughter. She reluctantly agreed, but she *did* agree, that he had a right to be disappointed by the pertinacity of Ida—that he was entitled to compel her obedience—that the Earl of Downmere was in every respect the most eligible husband that he could have selected for her—and that

the 'love-affair' was a mere folly, which ought to be discountenanced on every account.

"And now that ~~you~~ have compelled me to speak plainly, my good Sir," ~~she~~ resumed ; "although I assure you that I had resolved to do nothing of the kind, you may appreciate the difficulty of the position in which I was placed. Sydney Elphinstone is my nephew, and at first I feared (as you are aware, with some justice) that you might possibly so far mistake me as to believe that I should countenance his suit from interested motives ; while, after you had informed me of your intention of adopting and enriching your nephew, should your wishes be disregarded, I became equally apprehensive that I might appear to abandon the cause of my own, because Ida could no longer enrich him with the noble fortune to which she had expected to succeed. Now, however, that we thoroughly understand each other, there is no longer any reason why I should shrink from acknowledging that I have, from the moment in which it was confided to me, considered the

whole affair as childish and absurd in the extreme. Sydney is a fine young fellow, but he is still a mere boy, who can scarcely be supposed to know his own mind; while Miss Trevanion——”

“Is a woman of six-and-twenty, who is as ready to make a fool of herself as any boarding-school Miss of fifteen,” broke in the merchant, with a portentous frown; “and who must consequently be treated as such. I will see Lord Downmere to-morrow. Fortunately he has no false delicacy on the subject, and, moreover, knows nothing about the Elphinstone affair; so that in so far as he is concerned, there is no harm done; and after I shall have seen his lordship I will lose no more time in making my final arrangements, in which, my dear Lady Mary, I shall rely on your assistance and advice.”

“You know how sincerely both will be afforded, my good Sir;” said his companion with dignified suavity; “while I, on my part, am convinced that you will ask nothing from

me inconsistent with the tender affection which I feel for my sweet young friend."

"Of that you need have no apprehension ;" was the rejoinder of the merchant ; "for that very affection must, as a natural consequence, lead you to desire her prosperity and happiness. The path is therefore plain before us, and we have only to follow it steadily and resolutely. And now, *sans adieu*, my dear Lady Mary ; I fear that, in my inconsiderate egotism, I may already have detained you too long."

The lady rose with a polite disclaimer on her lips ; and then, having carefully collected her scattered treasures, and playfully enriched the silver standish of the master of the house with a portion of her rose-coloured labours, she smilingly took her departure. Come what might, she had carried her own point.

CHAPTER XIV.

AN INTERVIEW.

HENRY FERDINAND, Earl of Downmere, and Baron Woodlyn, had, as we have already shown, no very overpowering passion for the beautiful Miss Trevanion; although he was by no means insensible to the fact that with her many graces and attractions, she could not but do honour to his name and rank. His pertinacity in the pursuit of the lady was prompted by other, and to him more serious considerations. His lordship had throughout life restricted his worship to one idol, and that idol had been self; while so zealous had been his devotion, that his large income had gradually failed to

meet the demands made upon it by one, who was at once a profligate and a sybarite. More than one of his estates was deeply mortgaged, and this fact not only crippled his resources, but jarred upon his pride ; and he accordingly looked to the money-bags of the wealthy Mr. Trevanion for release ; nor did the unpleasant and mortifying circumstance of his rejection by sundry well-dowried beauties to whom he had previously offered the privilege of relieving him from his embarrassments, tend to weaken his anxiety for success in the present instance. He was deterred by no false delicacy in his pursuit of a woman to whom his addresses were unwelcome, for his past associations with the sex had not initiated him into the shrinking sensitiveness of its purer and better portion. Recognising no dignity save that of title, he looked upon the marriage which he now contemplated, as a fair and equitable barter. He needed the princely fortune of the heiress to enable him to terminate his life as he had commenced it, in

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self-indulgence and display; while he was content to give in exchange a name which he had done nothing to illustrate, and a rank which he had done nothing to adorn.

Nevertheless, there were moments in which the haughty and self-centred man brought himself to believe that in bestowing his hand upon the high-bred and fascinating daughter of Mr. Trevanion, he was about to make a heavy sacrifice; nor were his private reflections more flattering to Mr. Trevanion personally. That the courtly and dignified merchant desired the alliance for his own sake, the peer could not, and did not believe, for he had wit enough to perceive at once that their several natures were not merely incompatible, but even antagonistic both in principle and feeling. "No, no;" would the earl murmur to himself with a saturnine smile, as he shook his gouty leg, and swallowed an olive to relish the more keenly his penultimate glass of claret; "No, no; the old fellow cannot deceive me, bland and smooth as he is; he wants a lift upon the social ladder,

and is willing to pay handsomely, provided the stride be a long one, but perhaps it is better so; I am not anxious to marry the whole family."

And Lord Downmere was right; Mr. Trevanion had never for a moment cheated himself into a belief that he was working for the happiness of his daughter in forcing forward her union with the selfish egotist who was to raise her to the peerage; his motive stood bare and unconcealed before him; nor had he ever striven to veil it from the child whom he desired to sacrifice to his own personal views and ambition; and although under such circumstances, policy induced him to affect towards the peer the respect and deference which appeared to be a legitimate homage yielded to his rank, the haughty merchant despised him in his secret heart, and looked upon him merely as a necessary tool to further his own views.

Thus, each thoroughly understood the other; each had a point to carry, and each was

equally resolved to carry that point, if success could be ensured by his own exertions.

As he had intimated to Lady Mary, Mr. Trevanion on the morrow had another interview with the earl, whom he encouraged to persevere, laughingly reminding him that no woman of spirit would willingly be won unsought; and dropping at the same time, as if accidentally, certain hints regarding the brilliant expectations of his daughter, which wonderfully tended to increase the enthusiasm of the noble suitor.

This fact, however, Lord Downmere did not desire to render too apparent, and he consequently considered it expedient to evince something like sentiment, although an attempt to play the lover sat but loosely upon him.

“She is certainly a monstrous fine woman, my dear Sir;” he said complacently; “a very fine woman indeed; and has no doubt every right to play the coquette a little before she yields.—provided always that she yields at

last ; and as you assure me that she will do so —— ”

“ Your lordship may rest assured of it.”

“ Well then, I see no objection to the course which you propose ; and I will afford her another opportunity of recanting her declared determination. I will call at your house again, but you must promise me the support of your influence and authority. I am so unaccustomed to this sort of thing that I am quite unable to do justice to myself.”

“ Had not your lordship better see her alone ? ” asked the merchant.

“ No, Sir, no ; ” was the eager rejoinder ; “ I consider your presence to be most desirable.”

“ As you will, my lord ; ” said Mr. Trevanion somewhat impatiently ; “ but, perhaps, after all, we had better be guided by circumstances. All that I will venture to urge is that no time should be lost, as the present state of things must necessarily be unsatisfactory to all parties. My carriage is at the door ;

will your lordship accompany me at once to Richmond ?”

“ If you really consider it expedient for me to do so, certainly ;” was the reluctant reply ; “ although I have an important engagement at my club ; but ‘ when a lady’s in the case ’ you know, there is no alternative ; and as you justly remark there will be many arrangements to make on both sides after the affair is decided, which will occupy a very considerable time ; so let it be as you propose ; in ten minutes I will be ready.”

Lord Downmere was almost as good as his word, and in less than half-an-hour the two gentlemen were on their way to the splendid villa of the merchant.

When their arrival was announced to Miss Trevanion, she excused herself on the plea of indisposition ; but a second and peremptory summons from her father compelled her appearance in the drawing-room, which she entered, to his intense mortification and displeasure, in a loose white muslin wrapper, with her

fine hair hidden beneath a close and simple lace cap.

“Miss Trevanion!”—he exclaimed angrily; “Is that a fitting costume at such an hour, and for the reception of such a guest?”

“Not a word, my dear Sir, not a word;” said the earl, as with a courteous inclination, he rose from his seat, and extended his hand to the pale and shrinking girl. “Have you yet to learn that ladies understand all these little matters to perfection; and do you imagine that your fair daughter is not well aware that she is ten times as bewitching in her present costume as when avowedly adorned for conquest?”

“I trusted that my indisposition would have sufficed to excuse my non-appearance;” said Ida, addressing her father, as with a cold and haughty inclination of the head, she withdrew her hand from that of her unwelcome visitor.

“Well, well, since his lordship is kind enough to overlook so great a breach of de-

corum and good-breeding, we will say no worse upon the subject:" said Mr. Trevanion, who could not conceal from himself, that had his daughter been influenced by the most refined coquetry, she could not have succeeded in appearing more lovely than in her present plain and simple attire; "and we have moreover, a more serious subject to discuss. Lord Downmere is here, Ida, to receive your final answer to the proposal with which he has honoured you—Mark me, your *final* answer."

"I regret," was the firm rejoinder; "that his lordship should have considered such a visit necessary after our late interview. I had hoped——"

"Pshaw!" interposed the merchant, impetuously; "all recurrence to the past is idle; you know my determination, and you have now only to express your compliance with my will."

"And is it thus, that the Earl of Downmere would woo his bride?" asked Ida, contemptuously.

"I am content to woo her after any fashion," said the peer, with a courteous bow; "so that I am happy enough to win her."

"Be generous, my lord;" said Miss Trevanion; "and abandon a suit which can bring you neither honour nor happiness. I should be false, alike to you and myself, did I not at once avow that I have no longer a heart to bestow. I feel as I have already declared, flattered by your preference, but I can never become your wife."

"So you assured me at our last interview, my dear young lady;" replied the earl, perfectly unmoved; "but I am quite aware that it is one of the many privileges of your sex to torture the hearts of your admirers, and I accordingly trusted to time and reflection to operate a change in your decision."

"And your lordship did wisely;" broke in the merchant, who with difficulty controlled his anger as he listened to the decided words of his daughter; "for women seldom know

their own minds from one hour to another ; and Miss Trevanion is at this moment an illustration of the fact. But we have already had somewhat too much of this folly ; and she will do well to act more rationally, and to avow at once that she is both honoured and happy in the brilliant prospect which your flattering preference holds out to her."

"A devoted heart, and a splendid position ;" said the peer pompously ; "what, my dear madam, can you require more than this ?"

"Less, much less, would suffice to my ambition, my lord ;" replied Ida ; "all I ask is the first, and you must pardon me if I frankly declare that it is a gift which you have not to bestow. Let us deal honestly with each other, Lord Downmere : I am not deceived as to my own position in life ; and am quite aware that despite all the indulgences which have been lavished upon me, I am still only the daughter of a merchant, who, however wealthy and however honoured he may be, is still merely a merchant ; and that thus I am no fitting wife

for the Earl of Downmere. Pardon me, father," she added, as she marked the displeasure of Mr. Trevanion; "but this is no moment for idle pretence or frivolous vanity; we must all look the truth steadily in the face, and not seek to deceive ourselves or each other by flimsy fallacies. I would not that Lord Downmere should suspect that the merchant, whose reputation is as untarnished, and whose blood is as ancient as his own, is now courting his alliance from any mean pandering to his rank and to the ennobling of his child, from a mere paltry love of title and aggrandisement, for I well know that it is not so—nor would I that my father, when urging me to plight my faith to a man whom I do not love, should so far delude himself as to imagine that the proud peer who condescends to sue for an affection which he can never gain, is influenced by any affection for myself. I see and bitterly feel the truth of my position. On one hand, I am to be made a medium of vengeance, and on the other——"

“Enough, Miss Trevanion, enough!” exclaimed the merchant vehemently; “this insolence is intolerable and unprecedented. So far I have listened patiently, but my forbearance, great as it has been, has nevertheless a limit.”

“I cannot, of course, presume to decide the motive which you were about to attribute to my addresses, my dear Madam;” said the earl, waving his hand deprecatingly towards his excited host; “but of this I can conscientiously assure you, that if you believe them to have been prompted by any other than my profound and ardent admiration of your many perfections, you not only do me a grievous wrong, but are unjust to yourself. As to the disparity of rank to which you have alluded, it is a mere chimera, when you do not require to be reminded that your grace and loveliness would do honour to a throne. And remember, Madam, remember;” he pursued emphatically; “that as my bride—as my wife—as Countess of Downmere—you will stand near the steps

of one, among the noblest and proudest of the realm. A rumour has reached me that I have a rival, younger, no doubt, and more likely to captivate the eye of one so lovely as yourself, than I can hope to be ; and although I had been assured the report was false, your own declaration that you have no longer a heart to bestow leads me to believe that such may nevertheless be the case ; but let me entreat you to reflect, my dear young lady, before you consign attractions so brilliant as your own to comparative obscurity. You can be little aware of the extent of the sacrifice which you contemplate. You were made for the world, and you owe it to the world to fulfil your destiny. As my wife—as Countess of Downmere—it would be brilliant. For your own sake—for mine—”

“ A thousand thanks, my good lord, a thousand thanks ;” said the merchant ; “ for a condescension of which my wilful child is apparently so unworthy ; but I entreat of you to urge her no further. She cannot be insensible

to the generosity of your arguments, and *she will not*—to this I pledge myself. She has now exhausted her romance, and must be prepared to listen to reason. Once more I must request of you to leave the affair in my hands.”

“Another word and I have done ;” said the earl, who gathered courage from the fear that the coveted wealth of the merchant might yet escape him, and who was anxious to compel the lady to something at least bordering upon concession ; “I have endeavoured, my dear Miss Trevanion, to place before you the mere worldly advantages of an union which would make me supremely blessed ; but I would also impress upon you the sincerity and ardour of my attachment, of which I am deeply grieved to be compelled to admit that you have expressed a doubt ; do me more justice ; and forgive me if I add that I was wholly unprepared for such mistrust and repugnance on your part after the encouragement which I received from your estimable father, upon whose good faith

I placed the firmest and most complete reliance."

"I know not, my lord;" said the wearied and persecuted girl, sadly; "what assurance my father may have given you—it is not for me to comment on his actions, or to criticise his motives. He has doubtlessly acted according to his own idea of propriety and right; but I at least am guiltless of having misled you for a moment; and harassing and painful as this subject cannot fail to have been to all parties, I trust that you will do me the justice to exonerate me from having wilfully prolonged it."

"I can indeed most conscientiously acquit you of any attempt to do so, Miss Trevanion;" was the ironical rejoinder of the earl; "but I have nevertheless an undoubted right to complain of the careless and uncompromising manner in which you have rejected my addresses, conceiving, as I do, that they might have met with more consideration."

"This persistence, my lord;" said Ida,

haughtily ; “ is rapidly degenerating into persecution ; and is wholly deficient in both dignity and generosity. I cannot for a moment bring myself to believe that our very slight acquaintance can have inspired you with an attachment to myself personally which could alone afford an excuse for your extraordinary pertinacity ; and I have consequently endeavoured to discover its true and adequate motive. On mature reflection I have only been enable to imagine one, and that one so utterly incompatible with the exalted rank to which you evidently attach no mean value, that for the sake of your own dignity I can only trust that I do you an injustice. I have already so far overstepped the reserve of my sex as to admit to your lordship that my affections are bestowed elsewhere ; and bestowed, I am proud to say, where my heart was the treasure sought, and not my wealth. What then, my lord, do you seek in thus urging me to become your wife ? I feel humbled by the reply forced upon me by my reason.”

“Really, my dear Madam, you are incomprehensible;” said the peer uneasily.

“Rather say, my lord, that she is unworthy of the honour which you propose to do her;” exclaimed Mr. Trevanion, as he rose angrily from his seat; “but I am myself to blame for her wrong-headedness; she has been so long her own mistress that she appears to have forgotten her duty as a daughter and her courtesy as a woman. Trust me, this shall be remedied. And now, Miss Trevanion, hear me. You do not leave this room, or his lordship’s presence, save as his affianced wife.”

“Should Lord Downmere have no other engagement, Sir;” said Ida firmly, as the deep blush of outraged pride spread over her cheek and brow; “my morning is also disengaged; and since such is your will, I can pass it here as patiently, although perhaps not so pleasantly, as in my own apartment.”

“My lord,” said the merchant struggling to subdue his irritation; “I am mortified beyond all expression that a child of mine should

expose herself as Miss Trevanion has done; mortified and pained to find that my authority is thus set at nought; but I entreat you to believe that my plighted word *shall* not be forfeited. Prouder spirits than that of the young lady before you have been bent, and she shall learn ere long that a father's will is not to be braved with impunity. She may, as she insanely affects to believe, have given her heart to a beggar, but her hand must be my gift, and shall not follow it."

"Compose yourself, my good Sir, compose yourself;" said the peer with an indulgent smile; "I am aware that young ladies are apt to be romantic, and to form magnificent ideas of 'love in a cottage;' but it is equally certain that on mature consideration they bring themselves to prefer a diamond tiara to a wreath of daisies; and to estimate the respectful attachment of a rational suitor beyond the wild and ephemeral passion of a mere boyish love."

Miss Trevanion started, and the blood burnt

still more painfully upon her already crimsoned cheek.

“I cannot”—pursued the earl; “I really have not moral courage enough, to say to your lovely and fascinating daughter, that I consent to resign her to a rival, for by so doing I should resign my own hopes of happiness; and the pertinacity of which she complains must sufficiently prove to her the value which I attach to her possession. You, at least, will not blame me for clinging to the last to the brightest dream of happiness in which I have ever indulged. The ‘slight acquaintance’ upon which Miss Trevanion lays such stress as regards her own feelings, has been a period so full of hope and anxiety to myself that it appears to have absorbed the best portion of my existence; and rather than forego an anticipation which has made that existence doubly dear to me, I am content still to wait, if such should be her pleasure, until she does me more justice.”

“I thank you, my lord, deeply and ear-

nestly thank you for your forbearance ;” said Mr. Trevanion ; “ and in reply to so much generosity, can only assure you that your patience shall not be too severely taxed.”

“ I rely upon your promise ;” said the earl, as he rose from the sofa upon which he had been seated, and bowed low to the lady, who acknowledged his parting courtesy in silence ; “ and the devotion of a life shall prove to your charming daughter that I am worthy of the prize for which I have so resolutely striven.”

In another moment Ida was alone.~

CHAPTER XV.

A DINNER PARTY.

IDA was alone with her own thoughts, and for awhile they were full of angry bitterness. Towards the earl they were compounded of contempt and disgust. "No, no, it is not to me that he has bowed his paltry pride;" she murmured to herself; "it is not for me that he has condescended to submit to insult, and to smile upon inferences which he could not have mistaken. He seeks me for my wealth; he would enrich himself, and make me the victim of his selfish cupidity. And I am without a friend—flattered and fooled by the world, there does not beat one heart upon

which I can lay down my weary head, and ask for rest.

“And yet I have dreamt such dreams of happiness—indulged such hopes of peace and of affection—peace!—affection!—what has a persecuted woman to do with blessings such as those. My estimate of life has been a false one, and now I begin to appreciate the frightful truth; perhaps I am wrong to struggle against my destiny—perhaps I should do well to give myself to this titled coward, who is just brave enough to make war upon the sacred feelings of a woman’s heart—I should find my reward in the world, my recompense in its smooth wisdom. I should make a brilliant marriage—be fooled and flattered still—wear the shame of a perjured spirit proudly, and find in the crowded saloons of fashion the home which I should have forfeited for ever elsewhere. It may be that such a fate might preserve me from deeper and more fatal suffering—it may be; for in this case, I could live on without a fear or a hope; the one would be

annihilated by the other; giving no love, I could never be subject to the pang of feeling it thrown back upon me, and the fire-flood of my passion indurated into lava, and crushing out my existence. And what if I become the wife of Sydney! Who shall tell me what may be my fate! What may be his! Poverty and Time—those are the gaunt and fearful adversaries with which I shall have to contend; and what will be their effect on him? It is easy to talk of tempests under a summer sky, and of wrecks beside a summer sea, but beneath the lightning flash, and on the roaring billows, we can alone estimate the extent of the evil. Should I marry Sydney, and become the bane of his existence, where then could I turn for help or comfort? and that I should do this were he to arouse the slumbering demon within me, I have a firm and fatal conviction. I cannot deceive myself; to him in whom I trust, to whom I give myself, I must either be a blessing or a curse—everything, or worse, far worse than nothing. A firm and

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faithful friend, or a bitter and unrelenting enemy. And knowing this, should I not do well and bravely to sacrifice my own happiness at once—to resist the pleadings of my own heart—and to refuse to become his wife? Could I not drown my own wretchedness and isolation in what the world calls pleasure—silence the importunities of my own rebellious spirit in the turmoil of dissipation, and console myself with the reflection that I was the only sufferer? Surely there would be heroism in this! But have I strength for such a sacrifice? Can I consent to make it, while one hope is left that Sydney's love might prove as lasting as my own? No; it is vain to strive against myself: and if I cannot read the future I must be content to risk its fruits. This womanish weakness is unworthy of me; I must trust; and abide by the issue of my faith. I cannot live loveless and alone, devouring my own heart, and feeling that I have been the passive tool of avarice and ambition. My path is plain before me; and rugged as it now is, it may lead to happiness at last."

It is a trite but true remark that when sorrow or even death is in a house, still the routine of domestic duties must be pursued, and in the former case, society still maintains its claim. Thus it was on the present occasion ; with one absorbing subject of interest pressing heavily upon her heart and mind, Miss Trevanion found herself compelled to obey the suggestion of her maid, by whom she was reminded that it was time to prepare herself to receive the guests who were, as she had in her excitement totally forgotten, expected that day at dinner. Every one has experienced at some moment of his or her life, the weariness of such an appeal to the patience ; and this simple circumstance tended still further to reconcile our heroine to the prospect of the 'mere competence' which must, at least, have a tendency to relieve her from sacrifices so irksome during her married life.

"Now," she mused, "I do not even belong to myself ; the chains of the world are round me ; and though they may have hitherto

appeared to be wreathed with flowers, the illusion is past, and I feel the galling of their iron links."

Alas ! wreath them as we may, none of us escape the pressure to our dying hour ; the careless may wear them loosely, but even they can never ~~throw~~ them off. We have visions of moral freedom in the future—we delude ourselves day by day with the hope that some change of scene or circumstance may emancipate us—but is it ever realized ?

Several of the guests had already arrived when Miss Trevanion descended to the drawing-room. There were three or four steady men of demure age—the personal friends, or rather associates of her father, for the self-sufficing merchant made no friends in the strict acceptance of the term ; a titled dowager or two belonging to the *clique* of Lady Mary Brooklands ; middle-aged women, who fully appreciated the merits of whist, and East India Madeira, and who were not yet totally insensible to the hope of repairing their widow-

hood by a second marriage, where their rank might prove an equivalent to the wealth of some ambitious commoner.

And perhaps it was a relief to Ida that the party was thus constituted—although in the lightness of her heart she had been accustomed to regard such assemblages as a wearisome infliction—for thus there was little demand upon her own exertions ; she had but to listen and to endure ; and as she looked very lovely while doing so, her silence was unnoticed amid the animated chatter of the dowagers, the sententious declamation of the politicians, and the languid ejaculations of her mother.

One circumstance only tended to annoy and discompose her, and that one was the extraordinarily-significant glances which were turned on her from time to time, the little smiling nods, and patronising smiles of the ladies, and the less demonstrative but still equally peculiar looks of the gentlemen. She appeared to herself to have suddenly become the object of some occult interest to every one

about her ; nor did she fail to remark that the usually expressionless face of her mother exhibited a self-gratulating complacency which it had never before worn. Lady Mary alone was calm and stately as usual ; and appeared totally unconscious of any extraneous cause of excitement.

Suddenly, however, the thoughts of Ida were diverted into a fresh channel by the mention of a name which she was aware could never be uttered in the presence of her father without exciting an unpleasant emotion.

“By the bye, Trevanion,” said Mr. Plumbtree, a county member who was engaged with his host in some important commercial speculations ; “are you aware that your uncle is in town ? I met him yesterday ; and I need scarcely tell you that his first subject was that unlucky farm that forms so ugly an angle into his estate, and which he is so constantly urging me to sell, although I have decidedly refused to part with it for the last ten years. It seems that Lady Trevanion has

set her heart upon converting it into a dress-dairy, where she may skim her cream out of glass and porcelain, and play Marie Antoinette at Trianon on a small scale."

"I was *not* aware that Sir Jasper Trevanion was in town;" was the cold reply; "for, as we hold ~~no~~ communication whatever, I am necessarily ignorant of ~~his movements~~."

"I wish that your difference, be it what it may, could be adjusted;" said the guest; "and I have reason to suspect that the baronet would gladly meet you half-way. What say you? Will you allow me to negotiate between you?"

"I believe that both parties are well satisfied with things as they are;" was the discouraging rejoinder.

"I must be allowed to differ from you;" persisted Mr. Plumbtree; "for, to my surprise, your stately kinsman made many inquiries concerning yourself and your family, which convinced me that he considered the feuds to have endured long enough; while, to

be candid with you, the present moment seems a very propitious one for you to tender or receive the olive branch—the ‘coming event’ being calculated to ensure you high ground.”

As Miss Trevanion raised her eyes to her father in some anxiety to learn the spirit in which he would receive the suggestion, she saw his own fixed upon herself with an uneasy expression which startled her; nor were his next words more intelligible than his look.

“It is extremely probable;” he said drily; “that the baronet and his son may be more deeply interested in the event to which you allude than they anticipate. I must decline, however, until it has actually taken place, all overtures to a reconciliation, which, had Sir Jasper been enabled years ago to foresee the future, would never have been necessary. I fully appreciate the kindness of your motive, my dear Sir, but we will, if you please, dismiss a subject which cannot prove otherwise than uninteresting to the friends by whom we are surrounded.”

"Is Lady Trevanion also in town?" eagerly inquired his wife, heedless of the desire which he had expressed that so ungracious a theme should not be thus publicly pursued.

"Yes, Madam, both Lady Trevanion and her son; and a very fine and promising young man he is. We are quite proud of him in the county, I assure you, where he is, as you may believe, the object of more than one long-sighted speculation."

"How delightful for his mother;" whined out the weak hostess with a very audible sigh; "I have often regretted that I never had a son."

"*Your* regrets are uncalled for, my dear Madam;" said Sir Giles Euston who sat near her; "when we look across the table—you could not have anticipated perfection in both instances."

"Besides which," followed up a jewelled matron with an encouraging smile to Ida, who became more and more perplexed as the conversation proceeded; "even Mrs. Trevanion,

with her usual good sense and judgment, must perceive at once that this is no moment to encourage such a feeling. Few mothers, I should imagine, have greater reason to be both proud and gratified than herself."

"A fact of which my friend Mrs. Trevanion is fully aware, I can assure you, my dear Lady Somers," said the stately Lady Mary with a deprecatory smile; "but I must really entreat your forbearance for Ida, who is, I can see, uneasy under this avalanche of flattery."

"It is its tone rather than its tenor, by which I am discomposed;" said the young lady smiling in her turn, but with a very different expression; "I am at a loss to understand the mysterious import of the covert congratulations of which I am evidently the object to-day; although I cannot but feel deeply touched that such should be lavished on me at the very moment when they were the least anticipated."

"How prettily she keeps her secret;" whispered Sir Giles to his supine neighbour, who

was about to utter one of her inane and inopportune replies, when her voice was drowned beneath that of Lady Mary, who hastened to inquire with well simulated curiosity of Mr. Plumbtree, "if Lady Trevanion had come to town for the birthday."

"I do not pretend to say that such was the precise errand;" was his reply; "but I understand that it is at all events her intention. Ladies, as you must be aware, Madam, who possess a Golconda in their jewel-cases are not sorry to have so brilliant an opportunity of displaying their treasures; and Sir Jasper certainly mentioned that both he and his wife had determined to attend the Drawing-room."

"That will be charming!" exclaimed the hostess, thoroughly roused out of her apathy; "Do you hear, Ida? You will at last see your grand-aunt—for Ida is also to be at the Drawing-room, Sir Giles; and ——"

"Mrs. Trevanion, will you be good enough to send Lady Somers some pine?"—broke in the merchant in a tone by which she was at

once silenced, and which rendered her hand so unsteady that she gratefully accepted the proffered aid of the officious Sir Giles, who hastened to relieve her from the duty which thus suddenly devolved upon her; while, as if warned that she had in some way or other, for which she could not account, excited the displeasure of her husband, the cowed and cowering woman, after casting one timid glance of inquiry towards the family friend, who replied by a gracious gesture of assent, bowed silently to Lady Somers, and rose to leave the table.

Her example was immediately followed; and in a few moments the ladies of the party were assembled in the drawing-room, cosily established upon sofas and lounges, to spend over coffee and gossip the hour which must intervene before the re-appearance of their lords. This was an interval which Mrs. Trevanion habitually passed, if not quite in sleep, at least in silence; so little was expected from her that she had no motive for exertion; and accordingly, she had no sooner plunged into the

depths of her cushions, leaving her daughter and Lady Mary to do the honours of the house, than she sank into total eclipse, to the great relief of the latter, who tolerated with difficulty the harmless but wearisome vanities of the woman, whom she had supplanted in all her privileges alike of hostess, wife, and mother.

“You will, no doubt, chaperon Miss Trevanion to court as usual, Lady Mary;” observed Mrs. Darlington with a sarcastic smile, as she poised the gold spoon upon the surface of her coffee-cup; “it must really be a great fatigue to you to be so persevering in your attendance! Once a year the thing is bearable enough at our age; essential in fact to our position in society; but, like all other duties, it degenerates into a bore from frequent recurrence; and *entre nous*, unless one has a place in the household, I am inclined to think that——”

“It is a heavy expense; and so it is, no doubt;” interposed Lady Somers, as she scat-

tered the chips of a wafer which she had been steeping in her Mocha over the rich carpet ; “ but, fortunately for Miss Trevanion, expense is no consideration with her ; and it is only women situated as I was, and as you are, the wives of younger sons, whose bills are inconveniently increased by these court-ceremonies ; but even were it otherwise, our fair friend could scarcely remain absent from the birthday, situated as she is at this moment.”

“ May I venture to inquire why my attendance is so essential on this particular occasion, Lady Somers ?” inquired the young lady ; “ and what peculiarity there is in my present position which appears to enforce it ?”

“ Upon my honour, my dear Miss Trevanion, you do indeed bear your faculties meekly ;” said her interlocutor gaily ; “ it is not every young lady on the eve of marriage with a peer of the realm who would ask such a question.”

“ I do not understand you, Madam ;” was the cold rejoinder.

"Come, come, you may trust us, my dear;" persisted the lady significantly; "we are in the secret; and I can assure you that both Mrs. Darlington and myself sincerely rejoice in your good fortune, and congratulate both Lady Mary and your father upon the successful issue of all their care; you will do them honour, my dear Miss Trevanion, and make a charming addition to the peerage. It is, indeed, quite a triumph, both for yourself and your family, and will be a sad blow to poor dear Lady Wallscourt, who, after all her scheming, has just been compelled, to her extreme mortification, to marry her three daughters to commoners, and yet they were really nice girls, very nice girls, and even tolerably good-looking; but then they had no money; and really society is now in such a factitious state that men of all stations look for fortune with their wives, especially men of rank, who are quite aware of the value of what they have to bestow."

"You labour under some strange mistake as

regards myself, Madam," said Ida, quietly ;
" as I do not anticipate becoming the recipient
of the honour to which you allude."

" Now don't be obstinate, Ida;" drawled her
mother, suddenly leaning forward in her chair;
" Lady Somers knows that you are to marry
Lord Downmere. Your father mentioned that
it was all settled, before you came into the
drawing-room, to-night."

" Impossible !" exclaimed Miss Trevanion,
indignantly.

" Quite the contrary, my love," laughed
Mrs. Darlington ; " we have been assured that
it is an *affaire finie*, and very well finished too,
take my word for it. You see papas *will*
betray secrets ; it is their privilege ; so do
not look so terribly aggrieved, but receive our
congratulations with a good grace."

" Did my father—did Mr. Trevanion, really
state this to be the case?" asked the agitated
girl, as her proud eye flashed, and her cheek
crimsoned.

" Yes, yes ; you are fairly committed ;"

said Lady Somers ; “ and will make your curtsey to her majesty as a bride-elect.”

“ I think that she ought to wear white and pearls ; that is my opinion ; ” droned Mrs. Trevanion ; “ if they wish to know it.”

No answer was vouchsafed by any of the party, but every eye was riveted upon Ida, who stood with parted lips and heaving bosom, alternately looking from one to the other. She was stung to the very heart, smitten to the depths of her spirit ; she could not misunderstand the ungenerous advantage which had been taken of her ; she felt that she was in the toils ; but her whole nature rose in rebellion against the moral wrong of which her father had been guilty ; the sacredness of her affections had been violated, and a feeling of resentment arose within her which at once restored her to composure.

From that moment she listened like one who had no interest in the subject under discussion. She scorned to utter a disclaimer—what to her, with her bruised and wounded

pride, was the trifling gossipry of a couple of idle women—straws floating upon the current; while the wound inflicted by her father sank down into the deep waters of her soul, and rested there.

“The last tie is dissolved which bound us;” she murmured to herself as she retired for the night; “every human being, breathing the air of heaven, is gifted with the privilege of free will where the happiness of a whole existence is at stake. Mine has been denied to me; I have been degraded into a subject of idle twaddle and sarcastic gossip.—Be it so. Henceforward it must be *ruse* for *ruse*.”

CHAPTER XIV.

“AN EVENT IN HIGH LIFE, &c.”

WHEN the father and daughter met on the morrow, their meeting was cold and constrained, and neither alluded to the subject by which they were severally engrossed; Mrs. Trevanion, as was her habit after receiving company, breakfasted in her dressing-room, considering it incumbent upon her to be overcome by fatigue; the merchant buried himself in the columns of the *Times*, and Lady Mary skimmed the pages of the *Morning Post*. The meal was a dreary one; and at its close Mr. Trevanion ceremoniously presented to his daughter a folded paper which was lying

beside him, with the intimation that he desired to give a ball on the evening of the birthday, and that she would find in that list the names of the guests whom he personally desired to invite, leaving the necessary additions to the discretion of Lady Mary Brooklands and herself.

"You will see, Miss Trevanion," he said coldly; "that the one which heads the list is that of the Earl of Downmere; you will know who should, and who should not be invited to meet his lordship; and I need scarcely tell you for your guidance that you are *committed*."

"To what, Sir?" inquired Ida with a kindling cheek.

"To the world, and to your own dignity and propriety of feeling. By sunset this evening, thanks to a knot of marvel-loving and marvel-disseminating women, all London will be aware that you are pledged to the earl, and that this ball is given in honour of your betrothal. You will therefore act ac-

cordingly. Not a word, if you please ; the subject has been already sufficiently discussed between us, and I beg to be spared all further verbiage upon a topic which has become distasteful to me. Will you do me the favour to send out the cards by to-morrow night ?”

“Certainly,” was the calm reply.

“Do not, Lady Mary, if you please, exceed three hundred ;” pursued the merchant ; “I need not say that, with one solitary exception, all your friends will be as ever, both welcome and acceptable. I will make the necessary arrangements with Gunter ; and perhaps you will oblige me by issuing your own orders to Taplow. I am sorry to tax your kindness so heavily, but I am selfish enough to be unwilling to forego the advantage of your taste and experience.”

“I should like at least to understand the extent of your intentions, my dear Sir,” said the lady.

“Your judgment will be their best limit,

Madam ;” was the courteous reply, “ I would request of you to bear in mind the *intention* of the festival, and to render it worthy of its motive.”

“ I will endeavour to fulfil your wishes to the letter ;” smiled the family friend, careless that her nearest relative was officially excluded from the contemplated fête , as with a stately bow, Mr. Trevanion bade her ‘ good morning,’ and stepped into his carriage.

“ Surely, my dear Ida, you are not about to abandon me with this herculean task upon my hands !” exclaimed Lady Mary, as her young companion was about to leave the room.

“ I must beg to be excused all participation in your labour ;” said Miss Trevanion, with a bitter smile ; “ Simmonds shall furnish you with the visiting-book, from which I will direct him to erase the name of Mr. Sydney Elphinstone, and you will then have no difficulty save that of selection.”

“ Do you wish to visit upon me the annoyance caused by your father ?” asked the lady, deprecatingly.

"By no means ; but I disclaim all further right of interference under this roof."

"Nay, nay ; is not such a disclaimer either premature or childish ?"

"I think not."

"Upon what then do you base it ?"

"Upon the very simple fact that the exclusion of the individual who would have been the most welcome to myself, renders the whole affair indifferent to me."

"Remember, Ida, that I might equally have declined the task on the pretext that my own nephew was put *hors-de-combat*."

"You might, madam ; but you did not."

"As a matter of course ! I can have no right to dictate to Mr. Trevanion what guests he shall receive under his own roof ?"

"Certainly not ; nor have I on my part attempted to do so ; but I may at least exert my undoubted privilege of resenting the insult offered to one who is excluded."

"I do really wish, my dear girl, that I

could induce you to listen to reason. Much as you resent your father's opposition to your wishes ;" said Lady Mary ; " I can assure you that he is actuated only by a desire to ensure your happiness."

" Did you always think so, Madam ?" asked her companion coldly.

" Yes, certainly—that is, after I found—"

" That your nephew in becoming the husband of Ida Trevanion would not secure the hand of Mr. Trevanion's heiress. Oh, trust me, Madam, we do not deceive each other. But we need not waste words upon this subject—my father is right ; it has indeed been sufficiently discussed ; let us dismiss it, and each perform our promise. Invite your own guests—I will take care that the cards shall be duly delivered ; and, if it should chance by accident that my poor mother should possess some unsuspected friend whom it might pleasure her to see at her side among the crowd by which she will be overlooked, perhaps you will do me the favour to insert that name

where, in my selfishness, I might have sought to inscribe another."

Before Lady Mary could reply Miss Trevanion had disappeared.

END OF VOL. I.

